

*UNSETTLING TIMES: LAND, POLITICAL
ECONOMY AND PROTEST IN THE BEDOUIN
VILLAGES OF CENTRAL JORDAN*



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*For Jennie Williams, first as always in my thoughts, and for my Mother and
Grandmother.*

*And in memory of Khalid Muhammad Karaizneh Salaytah, my dear friend. He will be
greatly missed.*

اهدي واكرس هذا الرسالة لذكرى خالد محمد كرايزنة السلايطة الله يرحمه. كان كأخي الأكبر وصاحبي العزيز
رح مشتاق إله جدا

DECLARATION

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. It has not been previously submitted, in part or whole, to any university or institution for any degree, diploma, or other qualification.

In accordance with the Department of Social Anthropology guidelines, this thesis does not exceed 80,000 words, and it contains less than 150 figures.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of discourses of contemporary Bedouin identity and political economy in central Jordan. Drawing on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork in the town of Madaba and its surrounding villages, it follows the experiences of young, mostly male, interlocutors from two largely settled but still discursively Bedouin '*ashā'ir*' (socio-political categories normally glossed in English as 'tribes'); the Bani Sakhr and the Bani Hamida. It provides a new approach to wider processes of nation-building, identity-formation, and state encompassment of marginal areas, in the face of mass forced migration, structural adjustment, the rise of new social forums (on- and off-line), and widespread protests. It considers questions of land settlement, sovereignty and the politics of everyday life in a rural region from which the protest movement dubbed Jordan's 'Arab Spring' emerged among supposedly traditionalist and loyalist Bedouin.

I examine the historical context behind the current social, political and economic position of my interlocutors via histories of land settlement, sedenterisation initiatives, and changing political institutions through Ottoman rule and the British Mandate, examining various processes of frontier governmentality that sought to pacify and settle, but also define and repurpose Bedouin as a conceptual category. Making an intervention in the long-standing anthropological debate around the nature and analytical usage of tribalism and the role of colonial effect in its construction in the region, I suggest a new analytical lens. I consider tribes as political modalities existing in a relationship of co-(re)production with the nation-state, within a political and moral economy of hospitality, protection and encompassment, which has also come to be used to symbolise the nation of Jordan itself. I analyse the processes that create and contest 'Bedouin' and 'tribal' as categories through which solidarity and sovereignty are claimed and contested.

In the face of postcolonial critiques and challenges over representation and Orientalism, anthropologists have rightly called for greater reflexivity and attention to positionality. Yet, somewhat problematically, they have largely withdrawn from topics around tribe and Bedouin. These concepts, aside from their contested and critiqued construction, continue to have conceptual and political power in Jordan and elsewhere, and anthropology is at risk of leaving them to development practitioners and policy-makers. Anthropologists might formerly have explained the social setting I study as one generated by agnatic kinship and segmentary lineage. I instead reconsider '*ashā'ir*' as political responses centred on certain limited projects of representative sovereignty.

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Any merit in this work is largely a result of the input of these and others, while the failures, errors and omissions are entirely my own.

NOTE

The names of many of the people in this thesis are pseudonymised either at the request of participants or due to the sensitivities of the topics they discussed. Others, especially those with a high public profile and national reputation, have allowed me to quote them directly, and I have done so using their real names. Place names and tribal names are all real, except in rare cases where the specific information given would be enough for someone with local knowledge to identify a pseudonymised interlocutor, in which case other plausible place names have been used.

I have transliterated oral and written terms and quotations from Arabic using a simplified version of the *IJMES* system, and in general where I have deviated from this system it is for the sake of fidelity to actual pronunciation. For instance, I have given the definite article (*al*) as it is pronounced, so that where it elides with the first letter of the word, instead of writing ‘al-Salt’ the city on north-central Jordan, I have given it as pronounced; ‘as-Salt’. The exception are Arabic words widely known or used in English with another form of transliteration. All translations are my own, unless specifically attributed.

Quotes from fieldwork encounters are mostly from the local Jordanian variety of *shāmy* (Levantine) Arabic, often in particular the Bedouin version (*al-‘amīyah al-badawīyah*) but on occasion use elements more associated with a wider educated spoken form. Where possible, I have tried to reproduce the colloquial pronunciations and particular linguistic choices of my interlocutors – for instance apart from formal or religiously charged words which tend to be pronounced ‘correctly’, I have transliterated the standard Arabic letter *qaf* as a hard ‘g’ rather than ‘q’, as this is how it is normally pronounced in everyday speech by rural Jordanian men (although women and some urban men may choose the Lebanese/Syrian pronunciation of *qaf* as a glottal stop), and the *tā mabuta* as ‘ah’, not ‘a’.

Some interviews where the participants wished were also conducted in English, or partly in English and partly in Arabic. Where this is the case, I make it clear in the text. Most of my informants belonged to two groups – the *Bani Sakhr* and the *Bani Hamida* who are both sufficiently large and politically important to have fairly standard transliterations used officially. However, when used as a descriptive term for that which is considered ‘of’ these groups, rather than the groups as entities themselves, local speakers use the nouns *Sukhur* and *Hamaydah* which I have also used on occasion. I hope this will not cause too much confusion to the reader.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 ORIENTATION: CONCEPTUAL GEOGRAPHIES OF FIELDWORK.....	5
1.2 INTO THE FIELD.....	19
1.3 LOCATING GENDER.....	26
1.4 OUTLINE.....	31
1.5 HISTORY.....	33
2 IN THE MARGINS: HISTORIES, MODELS AND INFRASTRUCTURES OF TRIBE	56
2.1 SOVEREIGNTY AND THE WEIGHT OF NAMES	65
2.2 THE MOSAIC AND THE SEGMENT: LENSES, MODELS AND PROBLEMATIC CONTEXTS IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE MIDDLE EAST.....	80
2.3 INFRASTRUCTURES OF TRIBE: LAW, BUREAUCRACY AND THE STATE	91
2.4 CONCLUSION	102
3 SETTLING LAND, SETTLING PEOPLE; SEDENTERISATION, SOCIAL CHANGE AND LAND SETTLEMENT IN THE MADABA REGION.	104
3.1 LAND AND MORAL ECONOMY: THE FAYIZ INHERITANCE.....	106
3.2 HISTORICISING THE LAND SYSTEM	110
3.3 THE CONSEQUENCES AND THE LIMITATIONS OF SETTLEMENT	120
3.4 CONTESTING LAND: CRISIS AND ADAPTATION.....	126
3.5 CONCLUSION	133
4 IN AND OUT OF THE <i>DĪWĀN</i>: LOCATING HOSPITALITY, SOVEREIGNTY AND PUBLICS IN JORDAN	137
4.1 A PLACE FOR HOSPITALITY	141
4.2 A PROTECTED SPACE AND A TEST OF SOVEREIGNTY	150
4.3 WHICH PUBLIC?: COMMUNALITY, EXCLUSIVITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY	152
4.4 A GENDERED PLACE	160
4.5 A PLACE OF ACCORD	165
4.6 CONCLUSION	168
5 “YOU CANNOT EAT US, OUR FLESH IS BITTER”: DILEMMAS OF CONSUMPTION, ACCUMULATION AND ANTICIPATION IN THE BEDOUIN VILLAGES OF MADABA	171
5.1 WHO EATS WHOM?: THE ENCOMPASSING BACKGROUND.....	174
5.2 IDEALISED CONSUMPTION: HOUSE-BUILDING AND FEASTING	177

5.3 PROBLEMATIC ACCUMULATION, ‘WHALES’, AND THE PROBLEM OF THE <i>SHABĀB</i>	184
5.4 ECONOMIC SUBJECTIVITIES: BOREDOM, STUCKEDNESS AND GENDER IN THE DEMOGRAPHIC BULGE	187
5.5 WAITHOOD AND THE ‘NOT-YET’	201
5.6 SEEKING BURIED TREASURE	204
5.7 IMAGES OF THE GOOD	208
5.8 CONCLUSION	213
6 DEMONSTRATING POWER AND PROTESTING THE POLITICAL: MODALITIES OF PROTEST AND COLLECTIVE ACTION IN CENTRAL JORDAN	215
6.1 HIRAK AND <i>HOSHAH</i> : MODALITIES OF DEMONSTRATION	217
6.2 THE DHIBAN HIRAK	225
6.3 ‘HIRAK IS FOR THE YOUNG AND POOR!’: THE GENERATIONAL, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GENDERED DYNAMICS OF LEADERSHIP	231
6.4 SITUATING PROTEST: REVOLUTIONARY SUBJECTIVITIES AND THE ‘ARAB SPRING’	236
6.5 ‘THEY DON’T CARE ABOUT DHIBAN’: COUNTER-DISCOURSES, TRIBALISING THE POLITICAL AND POLITICISING THE TRIBAL	240
6.6 MATERIALISING AND SENSING PROTEST	246
6.7 <i>DUWAR AD-DAKHLIYA</i> TO <i>DUWAR AR-RABIA</i> : SPRING AND WINTER IN AMMAN	250
6.8 FAILURES OF LEADERSHIP?	255
6.9 CONCLUSIONS	257
7 CONCLUSION: THE STRANGE CONTINUITY OF RUPTURE.....	261
8 REFERENCES.....	273

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Map of field site showing main villages.....	p.17
Figure 1.2: New houses and old ruins in Um al-Walid.....	p.18
Figure 1.3: Hamid and his older brother Abdalaziz show me the new house.....	p.18
Figure 1.4: Bedouin Masculinity. Hamid Dahamshah shows off his equestrian skills.....	p.20
Figure 1.5: Khalid Karaīznah with Ali’s flock outside the village of ar-Rama.....	p.23
Figure 1.6: ‘Ali’s flock ready for milking.	p.23
Figure 1.7: B’dul boy looks after goats in Um Sayhūn.	p.23
Figure 1.8: Ottoman ‘ethnographic’ map from <i>Filastin Risalesi</i> . From Danforth (2013:n.p).....	p.42
Figure 2.1: Tree diagram of the vast international Shammar <i>qabīlah</i>	p.75
Figure 2.2: The Dahamshah brother’s tree diagram and contested lineage list for the Bani Sakhr....	p.75
Figure 2.3: List and annotations (including a tree) of the main sections and divisions of the Bani Hamida. By Osama al-Hīsa.....	p.76
Figure 3.1: The original scope of the British Mandate’s land survey.....	p.117
Figure 3.2: Part of an early 1/10000 Cadastral map of Amman.....	p.117
Figure 3.3: Vegetation and precipitation map of Jordan.....	p.117
Figure 3.4: Jordanian land survey in progress in the field.....	p.117
Figure 3.5: Reproduction of an Ottoman-era contract in the Abu Jaber House, as-Salt. 5.....	p.129
Figure 3.6: Hijjah with ministerial crest and contact details	p.129
Figure 3.7: <i>Dira</i> Map from Peake.....	p.132
Figure 3.8: Dr Ahmed Oweidi al-‘Abbadi with his <i>shmargh</i> inside out talks to journalists, tribal leaders and protesters in front of a cadastral map of Jordan.	p.132
Figure 4.1: <i>Qasr mithqal</i> (‘Mithqal’s Palace’), Um al-‘Amad.....	p.139
Figure 4.2: <i>dīwān</i> Mithqal al-Fayiz – Entrance.....	p.140
Figure 4.3: <i>dīwān</i> Mithqal al-Fayiz – Interior.....	p.140
Figure 4.4: <i>dīwān</i> Mithqal al-Fayiz – front with dedicatory plaque.....	p.140
Figure 4.5: Ghazi Abu Qa’ūd, shows off his newly-built <i>dīwān</i>	p.142
Figure 4.6: The women’s guest room in Saif Dahamshah’s house in Um al-Walid.....	p.144
Figure 4.7: The <i>dīwān</i> of Hamīd bin Lufān ash-Shammary – south end.....	p.144
Figure 4.8: The <i>dīwān</i> of Hamīd bin Lufān ash-Shammary – north end.....	p.144
Figure 4.9: Hamīd bin Lufān ash-Shammary.....	p.144
Figure 5.1: Cartoon by Emad Hajjaj – 16 March 2013.....	p.175
Figure 5.2: Protesters hold slogan-bearing bread in front of the Labour Union offices in Amman.....	p.190
Figure 6.1: Collection of Bani Sakhr Facebook memes.....	p.222
Figure 6.2: Bani Hamida protesters raise a banner outside the gates of the University of Jordan..	p.223
Figure 6.3: The Unemployment Tent in Dhiban.....	p.229
Figure 6.4: The demolition of Dhiban Town square’s central tower.....	p.250
Figure 6.5: Political cartoon by Eimad Hajjaj from Al-Araby News.....	p.252
Figure 6.6 Facebook banner for civil disobedience campaign.....	p.253

PROLOGUE: LEAVE-TAKING AND NAMING

My experience of leave-taking at the end of my fieldwork in Jordan proved a revealing final encounter with the various concepts, discourses and dispositions to do with identity, politics, belonging and descent that came to dominate my fieldwork. My friends Hamid and Abdalaziz Dahamshah invited me to come and eat at their house before taking me to the airport for an early morning flight. These two young brothers, minor government employees from a rural village an hour south of the capital, are among many Jordanians who see themselves as meaningfully affiliated to a ‘tribe’, and who describe themselves as Bedouin, and in their case Bani Sakhr Bedouin. ‘You are our brother’ they told me at the airport and asked me when I would return. ‘Soon, God willing’ I said, ‘when I can afford it, I will certainly come’. We talked about them visiting me in Britain (a remote possibility given the UK’s visa system). ‘We must, we should know your family. Your father, your brothers, God willing soon your children. Really, next time you come you must come with your people [*ahl*]’. Saif, their older brother who had told me so much about Bani Sakhr genealogy and history added ‘Good luck with your book, God willing it will tell the truth... you are Sukhur [i.e., of the Bani Sakhr] now’.

These polite expressions of fictive kinship and of tribal association are commonly used and while flattering for foreigners (especially for anthropologists) they are not meant very seriously.¹ I was largely confined to the role of guest, a recipient (and occasional clumsy reciprocator) of hospitality and gifts, including knowledge. I was at most a friend, perhaps. The rhetorical statement that I was more than this is in itself a marker that I was no such thing – as we both knew. However, the link to ‘my book’ and the idea that I had been given some knowledge of something important gave these expressions a curious weight that day. Obligations had been shared, even if these were not the obligations of kinship or intimacy.

The day before, when I had made my goodbyes to Osama al-Hīsa, a young activist and protester, from another major Bedouin category, the Bani Hamida, he afterwards posted a picture of us drinking coffee and eating kunafah (a popular sweet

¹ Apart from in the important sense that association with a foreign researcher is an affirmation both of their knowledge of their social world and of their own importance within it.

cheese-based pastry) on Facebook, with the caption ‘Our last talk on politics with Farīd [an Arabic name close to ‘Fred’]. British but naturalised Hamaydah [*britāny mutajanis Hamaydy*]’. Again the expression is not meant seriously, but illuminates an important point: that for Osama being Hamaydah was not merely like being part of a family but comparable to nationality, a matter of *jans* [‘nationality’ but also ‘type’ or ‘species’], something conceptually comparable to being British. On reflection, this sort of statement influenced my decision in this dissertation to focus on the political nature of such categorical affiliations, and also their depth, their capacity to generate dispositions and distinctions, as nationalisms do. It also encouraged me to take seriously the significance of naming and names. These friends, by Arabising my name had given me a name,² a reputation, and even a weak and somewhat joking categorical affiliation and kinship tie. They were in effect offering me a limited and performative version of the incorporation and affiliation that I was trying to research. It was easy to imagine that in times past, and given a longer stay, these weak links might have solidified and come, within a few decades or at most a few generations, to be matters of blood and genealogy. My contention here is that possessing (or being associated with) a name, and with it a reputation, is as much a matter of politics, amity and of strategy as of blood.

My leave-taking reflected an acknowledgement of an important transaction (in the broadest sense) undertaken between us. I had been given knowledge that I should value, and which came with duties of representation and created obligations that extended both ways.

Earlier that day I had attended a goodbye lunch with another group of Bani Hamida interlocutors in a rural household in the remote and mountainous Jabal Bani Hamida area. It was organised by my key research collaborator Halima, manager of a Bani Hamida community NGO, and Ghazi Abu Qa’ūd, a Hamaydah Shaykh and village head who had helped facilitate my work in the Jabal Bani Hamida villages. I thanked him for all his help in a halting Arabic speech, and (perhaps getting carried away by my own rhetoric) I mirrored these sorts of farewell conversations professing exaggerated intimacy and regard. I thanked him for including me, and for teaching me about his family and about the Hamaydah, who I said were among the most hospitable people in Jordan. He thanked me but tutted and told me not to think too hard about the differences between people. ‘Yes, Hamaydah are generous, we were famous for *karām* [meaning

² As I was married but had no children despite my advanced age, they also gave me a somewhat mocking *kunya* (tekonym) of Abu Tumas, Thomas being a name chosen as stereotypically European and Christian.

valourised generosity and formal hospitality, associated with nobility in both senses]. But *y'ani* [a phrase of equivocation] this is not unique. We are all one. We are all Bani Adam [literally 'the sons of Adam', Bani being a common prefix to genealogical categories]' he declared. The restive guestroom, where we sat on the floor around platters of rice and meat, had moments before been full of noisy discourse and argument. Now it quietened, and everyone nodded in profound agreement. 'Listen to Abu Sultan (using Ghazi's *kunya* or teknonym)' they said, 'he is respected, his advice is good'. The irony of their automatic deferral to him, based on personal characteristics entangled with wider projects of reputation and honour, as he claimed that all people were one, and that I should not focus only on difference, was still with me when later at the airport the Dahamshah brothers expressed a desire to meet my 'people'. I felt I was in what Dresch (2000b) calls the 'wilderness of mirrors'. Abu Qa'ūd's ecumenical and universally encompassing vision of humanity might seem far removed from ideas of tribes and segmentation, however it was still posited as stemming from filiation; the sons of Adam had a common distant but 'known' apical point, a final agnatic progenitor of a name. This ecumenical vision is not, however, egalitarian; it partakes of lifeways defined by hierarchies of gender, age, and lineage. He was being generous to others, as fellow possessors of a tradition of honourable hospitality, but accepted the distinctiveness and perhaps implicitly the superiority of Bedouin, and especially Hamaydah, versions of it, and within this, especially that of influential senior men like him. This vision, as we shall see, has been adapted and reformed as a central image of the state, as the royal house has created Jordan along the lines of the patriarchal family. But this vision can also be used to criticise and resist the state, as a family where obligations are unmet and relations are not being acknowledged.

1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores how and why projects to create a modern nation-state in Jordan have become entangled with socio-political forms seemingly their antithesis. Jordan is often described both within and beyond the region as (perhaps exceptionally) ‘tribal’, a descriptive tendency that has waxed and not waned with recent reforms and development within the Hashemite Kingdom. I explore through ethnographic encounters within an area of peri-urban and rural villages south of Amman, the capital city, something of what this ‘tribalism’ means to those whose lives are caught up in it. Talk of tribes persists because it has become inextricably linked to types of social identity and categorisation, national politics and models of society which people find meaningful to think with and to use in the present. I consider the language of putative tribal categories, of shared honour and outwardly extending networks of relation reckoned genealogically through which claims and obligations can be made. This is not merely an anachronous vestige of a disappearing tribal Bedouin world rooted in a political economy of nomadic pastoralism, on the cusp of disappearing below the rising and atomising waters of modernity. Anticipation of this future by proponents of modernisation theory in Jordan and elsewhere has long remained frustrated. Instead, such reckonings of the social and political have been continually reproduced by particular historical and political-economic circumstances, and as such are as contemporary as the protest movements and social media channels through which they are increasingly expressed.

This is not to deny that ideas of tribe draw potency through resonances with deep historical continuities. An imagined past, connected to an assemblage of material culture and genres of oral history, genealogy and poetry has become a national

imaginary and foundational symbol; serving as Sally Howell (2003:224) puts it, ‘to articulate an identity that is still viable and linked to power and resources in the present’. For many of my interlocutors being ‘Bedouin’ and being ‘of’ their specific named ‘tribal’ category (concepts that will be defined below) is a meaningful and important way of identifying themselves and others and the relationships that might link them, determining wider relations with the state and other groups, as well as implying certain social and moral characteristics and dispositions. I focus thus not so much on the constructed-ness of such an imaginary, but on its conditions of possibility and through this its affective and political qualities. Following Candea (2010:4-5) I interrogate the circumstances and conditions behind such phenomena not to ask whether they “‘are real?’” or “‘made up?’”, but rather, “‘how have they been realized’” and “‘of what are they made?’”

Equally, I do not wish to overstate the degree to which such conceptions are inherently seen as meaningful, primary or authentic by Jordanians. Categories of identity like Bedouin and tribe are backed up by various types of infrastructural reality. Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002:162), writing on statehood in Turkey, documents the apparent ease with which people criticise the state and its ideology, and at the same time, continue to engage in practices which “‘reinstated it by default’” – but crucially, without “‘turning into believers’”, analysing this move via the concept of Lacanian cynicism. Similarly I note a certain ambivalence, if not usually cynicism, in some somewhat self-conscious and ironic performances of ‘tribe’ in contemporary Jordan. Yet these categories, for all that, are still taken very seriously.

The creation of a valorised and Bedouinised national culture in post-Independence Jordan has historically overlapped with a project of state-expansion into previously lightly governed margins. Actual nomadic pastoralists and Bedouin polities across *Bilad ash-Shām* (greater Syria) have been partially pacified, sedenterised and recast as enmeshed citizens of nation-states. Yet the potency of these forms, both as nationalised symbol and as political modality, remains. This I argue is a consequence of a certain conception and practice of mediational or representative sovereignty; a concept that will slowly emerge ethnographically through the following chapters. This exercise of sovereignty is both generative of and generated by *longue durée* historical dynamics, and of more specific events.

Starting from the widespread usage in Jordanian political talk of ‘*ashūrah* (pl. ‘*ashā’ir*) and *qabīlah* (pl. *qaba’il*), both often glossed in English as ‘tribe’, this thesis

gives an account of the everyday contestations that surround these terms, and their problematic association with the concept of ‘tribe’ as it has been deployed within and beyond anthropology. I consider these not as extended kinship networks or groups, but as potential categories within which claims to solidarity or group-ness can be made; resources to shape and contest shared subjectivities and loyalties.¹ I consider two primary examples of these categories, the Bani Hamida and Bani Sakhr. These two are among a number of large ‘*ashā’ir*’ categories (of hundreds of thousands of people) in Jordan, and the largest two in the Madaba region, associated over time (but not unchangingly) with certain names as well as with certain specific places. Thus, following Paul Dresch (1986, 1991) and for reasons I discuss in Chapter 2 (hinging on escaping some of the anthropological baggage of ‘tribe’), while I mostly think the idea of tribe is inescapable in this concept, these categories can in the abstract (when not using their proper name or an appropriate Arabic term) be more accurately and precisely defined as categories of name/space.

In Jordan *qabīlah* and ‘*ashīrah*’ are both used for describing categories of people of various sizes and levels of importance, and quite different structures. In general, ‘*ashīrah*’ is the more commonly used. Where Jordanians need to talk of ‘tribalism’ in the abstract in Arabic (which in my experience is not common, except in newspaper articles) they use the adjective ‘*ashirī*’ (‘tribal’) or as the concept noun ‘*ashā’irīyah*’ (‘tribalism’).² In Jordan *qabīlah* is usually used theoretically for the very largest level categories (like Bani Sakhr) with ‘*ashīrah*’ a ‘level’ below.³ In practice rather than *qabīlah* people talk of ‘*ashā’ir Bani Sakhr*’ – ‘the tribes of the Bani Sakhr’, maintaining a sense of plurality.⁴ Numerous other terms exist for describing smaller, more genealogically specific collections of families, and for those who live together now or historically camped together.⁵ Another important category is the *khamsat ad-dam*, ‘five of the blood’, made up of those sharing a paternal ancestor within five generations and

¹ Following Scholz *et al*’s (2017) exploration of resource as an analytical term, defined as ‘the means to create, sustain and alter social relations’ I have found it analytically useful to consider these categorical claims as resources.

² The term *qabīly* can also be used and is more common in Yemen (Dresch 2009).

³ Hence the common Arabic Dictionary definition of ‘tribe’ and ‘clan/sub-tribe’ respectively, but this is not always the case as the scale of the phenomena they describe can vary dramatically.

⁴ It is the plural nature of such terms that has led many scholars to call them in English ‘confederations’ (for instance, Musil 1928, Sweet 1976), problematic in its own way through the implied sense of free association between equal parties.

⁵ These include *hamulah* (literally ‘lineage’, especially used by villagers and those of Palestinian origin) or *fakhd* (‘thigh’ – a narrower group of more genealogically known relation). In the past the term *qum* was commonly used for a group of followers or riders, referring to a group defined not directly by genealogy but by purpose, and also having an element of an age-set about it.

thus closely related enough to share responsibility in matters of honour, revenge and compensation money payment. Specific terms suggestive of different scales are frequently in speech also replaced with generic ones such as '*aylah* (nuclear family, and *ahl* ('people' or extended family).

While such ways of dividing and identifying people within the wider social setting are ubiquitous, there is an important difference between talking about 'tribes' and talking about *tribalism*. Being Bani Sakhr or more genealogically specifically Mutirāt or Dahamshah or Hagaish Bani Sakhr summons up over wide social and geographic distances associations with place, history and certain moral characteristics, and to various degrees so does associations with specific urban families or even residence in certain suburbs. Especially in the case of the former '*asha'ir*, it is true that the significance of these names comes from people knowing them to be Bedouin names from a 'strong' '*ashīrah*. However, outside specific formal or commercial contexts (joining the army, seeking election to Parliament, wooing tourists) being 'Bedouin' or 'tribal' *per se*, in a generic, non-group-specific sense, was less emphasised, though significant at a discursive and national level. I encountered the word '*ashā'irīyah* rarely, and generally in ways informed by wider national and developmental discourses, in which cases the speakers also often used 'tribal' and 'tribalism' in English. The Arabic and the English terms have been in dialogue for a long time, as educated Jordanians know some of the wider associations of the English term, and as some Arab intellectuals have been influenced by modernisation theory.

My research question at its simplest is how, when and why do Jordanians (for instance the roughly 150,000 people who are identified contextually as Bani Sakhr) see such names as meaningful and useful as a resource to deploy in social life, and for what ends? Equally important, who controls this resource, how do they control it, and to what ends? The problem thus formulated may seem to suggest a national scale and a discursive mode of analysis. Yet, rather than a study of the formation of Jordan-as-nation-state or of the royal house as reproducer of social categories (themes that will be dealt with at length), this is first and foremost an ethnographic account of how these things look from a particular perspective.

This thesis is not then *per se* a critique of the discourse of particularistic patrilineal tribal authority in contemporary Jordan. It might, at times, be read as a critique of the way the royal house has used such concepts to provide legitimacy and a national imaginary that reproduces established political economic interests, maintaining

ethno-national, gendered and gerontocratic hierarchies. This in itself is not new or original, and has already been eloquently put by Joseph Massad (2001). More ethnographically, and perhaps more importantly, this dissertation is a description of how certain forms glossed as tribal retain relevance in Jordan's political economy even as they are reproduced and adapted to new contingencies. It explores the structures whereby even critiques of, and challenges to, the current order – such as labour unions, opposition politics, protest and alternative projects of power – find resonances and resources in the idioms of tribe and Bedouin.

In a recent volume on the problem of scale and historical continuity in the anthropology of the Middle East, Judith Scheele (2019a) argues that the 'state' as a conceptual field has come to dominate political anthropology so thoroughly that other political orders or logics are deferred to its margins or its failures. In many settings, including the Middle East, urban-based dynasties and later nation-states have coexisted with other political orders, coming into being through mutual recognition, and sometimes encompassment, of other types of political community. As such, Scheele states (2019b:188);

we need to analyze the principles that underpin political action. These principles, in turn... produce their own kind of history and regional connectivity.

I attempt this type of analysis here, and it is this I have in mind when talking of the political or moral economy of my area of research, not a bounded or national characteristic. The existence of these and other universalising analytics are not taken for granted but emerge from attention to experiential accounts of particular times and places.

1.1 Orientation: conceptual geographies of fieldwork

This thesis centres the experiences of a varied but interrelated set of people trying to make a life and a future within a particular geographic and historical setting. These people for the most part are young, economically precarious, and widely categorised as Bedouin. They are mostly men, but also include a few women, as well as their older family members and those in their wider social sphere. In contrast to traditional ethnographic ideals, I largely interacted with people via their public life, at university, at work, in the coffeehouse and the street. Only secondarily did I enter their domestic lives, and then usually in the carefully controlled role of guest. This focus on outer

faces, in part a recognition of ethnographic limitations and in part a deliberate decision, is, I argue, well suited to study the place and issues I have focused on.

The particular geographical setting is a swathe of small towns and villages to the south-east of the capital, slowly changing in character with increasing distance outwards from the city, from suburban and peri-urban to rural and finally arid steppe-land. Many inhabitants of these villages are families whose recent ancestors were nomadic or semi-mobile pastoralists. Now settled and mostly drawing their living through other means, my interlocutors were still often keen to stress the importance to them of limited pastoral production (accounting in most families for less than a third of total income), and a certain ideal of mobility; between jobs, settings and in some cases houses. At the centre of this area is the town of Madaba, 35km south of the capital city Amman, with a population according to the 2015 census of 105,000 people, and the capital of the Madaba Governorate, which has a total population of around 190,000 people (Jordanian Department of Statistics 2017).

Madaba itself is often described as ‘a Christian city’. It has a large Christian minority, and much of the centre of the town is still owned by three Christian families. As an urban space it is less overwhelmingly ‘Islamic’ in aesthetics than most parts of Jordan, despite the building of a large, Ottoman-style mosque in the 1990s in the heart of the old town which dominates the landscape and soundscape, over-topping the church towers and with an *adhan* (call to prayer) far louder than the church bells. This notwithstanding, two large churches occupy prominent positions in the town centre and on top of the old Tell (whose famous late Antique mosaics attract tourists). Despite Christian anxieties over apparently increasing Islamisation, there are many visible markers that proclaim the town as Christian and thus in local discourse unusually open and cosmopolitan: the unveiled women, prominent liquor stores on most streets in the centre (although their clientele is far from exclusively Christian), hotels and tourist businesses.⁶

The town is growing rapidly in almost every direction, with new clusters of houses, family compounds and apartment blocks springing up on the surrounding hills and fields, as well as many small new mosques, whose minarets and green lights dominate the skyline for miles around. Outside the centre the town is now, like most of

⁶ While most Muslims and Bedouin stressed the social and cultural unity and solidarity of people in the town – ‘we are all Madabans’ and ‘we are all Arabs’ – many Christians in Madaba feel excluded and minoritised within their own city, from which many have emigrated.

Jordan, inhabited by people who trace their origins back to a wide variety of sources.⁷ Madaba has a large *Mukhayam* ('camp') district, a now regularised settlement formed by refugees from Palestine since 1948 and their descendants, as well as smaller more recent populations of forced migrants from Iraq, Yemen and Syria. Various poorer neighbourhoods have grown up east of the King's Highway connecting Amman with Karak and the South, including Egyptian seasonal workers, Iraqi and Syrian refugees and labourers, agricultural workers and small business owners from across Jordan, and a small population of Dom.⁸

Much of the land outside the centre and throughout the surrounding countryside is owned and inhabited by people considered by the Madaba Christians to be, and often calling themselves, *Badu*, borrowed into English and most European languages as Bedouin. The term comes from the Arabic *Badawy* – describing a dweller in the *Bādīyah*, the steppe or wasteland.⁹ The term *Badu* has a historically and contextually varied area of meaning, and often is used relationally, but in general a broadly inclusive working definition might be Arabs who are seen as possessing or claim to possess recent descent from nomadic pastoralists, a certain genealogical status, and a tradition of honour and hospitality.¹⁰

In particular, much of the land around Madaba is considered the *dira* – a loosely-held notion of territory – of two specific named Bedouin categories: the Bani Sakhr (literally, the 'sons of rock') to the East of Madaba; and to south-west of the governorate the Bani Hamida ('sons of benevolence'), both claiming long, noble genealogies and histories. *Dira* as a term combines the sense of an area under the (claimed) protection of a named '*ashīrah*, and their zone of permitted movement and of claimed usufructuary rights, often in this area between areas of summer and winter

⁷ For political reasons, Jordan does not distinguish demographically in its census statistics between different identitarian or sectarian categories.

⁸ The Dom are a category of formerly nomadic non-Arab people who mostly work as scrap-metal workers, market traders, fortune tellers and entertainers widely considered to be related to European Romani.

⁹ Literally 'that which is visible', the *Bādīya* is differentiated from the Arabic *Sahrah*, which refers to arid or sandy desert more specifically. I will discuss its more specific social, political and legal meanings in the next chapter.

¹⁰ *Badu*, the plural of *Badawy*, has long been used as a group identifier, and when adopted into Medieval French was given the grammatically correct (but in this case not widely used) standard Arabic masculine plural 'īyn'. I have used Bedouin, despite this second-hand quality, due to its familiarity among English-speakers. In Arabic literature on the topic meanwhile, attention is given to the shared triliteral roots (b-d-w) between this term and the Arabic word meaning 'beginning' – suggestive of the widely held idea that Bedouin are ancestral to settled folk (Oweidi, 1982). Both proponents and opponents of 'tribalism' in Jordan make 'Bedouin' a label both atavistic and valorised, as a 'repository of an ancient and unchanged way of life' (Layne 1994:101).

camping and pasturage. In the winter, rainfall allowed pastoralists to take their animals far out east into the steppe, while in the summer, most stayed within areas with cooler temperatures, year-round pasture or good water supplies, further west. A long history of attempts at governing this latter area and imposing land registration and individual ownership (discussed in Chapter 3) has slowly weakened and mutated the concept of *dira*, but much of this land remains conceptually *balad as-Sukhr* (the country of the Bani Sakhr). This area is historically part of the broad region of Balga, stretching between the Wadi Zarqa and the Wadi Mujib, often described as ‘the land of a thousand *‘ashā’ir*’. With a claim to be the ‘original’ (meaning in this context pre-registration) owners of the land, once possessing customary grazing claims and semi-exploitative relationships of ‘protection’ with local cultivators, many of these Bedouin have maintained a sense of separateness from the peasantry and the Christians. This has remained through moving from camel-herding in the desert, via goat-herding at its margins, to first letting land to peasants to farming land themselves, and finally to working in government jobs. As such, as Chatty (2014) points out, Bedouin as a meaningful identity has persisted even as nomadic pastoralism has lost its economic importance.

Bedouin as a social category has always been applied relationally and reflects a spectrum, at the opposite end of which lies settled people, *hadhar*, either town-dwellers (*madinīyn*) or cultivators, *fallahīyn* (see for instance Burton 1858, Musil, cited in Tidrick 1990). Though most strongly associated with former camel-herders spending at least part of the year in the *Bādīyah* (who had greater range of movement and often were militarily more powerful), in some contexts nomadic, semi-nomadic and even settled sheep and goat-herders have also been called Bedouin. These terms have never been static, but nor are they merely descriptors of modes of livelihoods. People in this area have often varied their economic and subsistence activities depending on circumstances, and sometimes families or wider groups have pursued multiple modes at once. To townspeople (*madinīyn*) *Badu* could be any rough or ungoverned people, even villagers outside city walls. As people moved between various economic strategies over time, identity claims and the terminology used to describe them sometimes adapted or changed, but also sometimes long persisted, even when no longer entirely aligned to their current economic niche. As Stephan Leder (2015) argues, while ancient Arabic sources and European Orientalist scholarship both at times dwell on the dichotomy between the ‘desert and the sown’, and the people within them, interdependence and

movement has been more the norm than bounded categories where lifeway, socio-political form and identity are all aligned. Leder makes the important point that while ideas of the Bedouin and the *Bādīyah* as in some ways differentiated and opposed to settled civilisation do have precedent, in most Arabic discourse ‘the Bedouin constitute an intrinsic component of Arab society and history’, a differentiated but encompassed and integral part of a wider society, including people following different economic lifeways and with different socio-political structures.

There is a common discourse that (as Gubser’s (1973:28) interlocutor in Karak put it) ‘Bedouin are the true Arabs, from whom all Arab qualities are derived’. As well as referring to a former lifeway or economic niche, Bedouin origins are associated (though not exclusively) with being *asīl* – from a root meaning original or authentic, a property of lineages somewhat akin to nobility, and like the latter a property that can be claimed, contested and possessed to greater or lesser degrees. Such groups are the possessors of *usūl* (known origins and genealogy) and follow ‘*awā’id*’ (codes of conduct considered honourable).¹¹ Alongside atavistic connotations, many Arabs believe in Bedouin origins from the time of the Islamic conquests.¹² Theoretically Arab genealogists and poets often trace the origins of every known *qabīlah* back to the nomadic desert-dwelling Arabs, who remain their supposed exemplars.¹³ Many Jordanians regard *Badawiy* dialects as closer to the ‘original’ Arabic. In Jordan, as in Iraq, the use of elements once associated with the Bedouin dialect, especially the pronunciation of the letter *qaf* as the English ‘g’, is considered more masculine and men from other backgrounds have increasingly adopted it (Suleiman 2004).¹⁴

The terminology used to describe these social categories then is important but not straightforward. Most of my interlocutors preferred to talk about themselves specifically as *Sukhur*, *Hamayadah* or even more specific terms, yet if needing a general

¹¹ ‘*Awā’id*’ (see Oweidi 1982) is part of the broader set of customary laws and dispute resolution procedures known in Arabic as *urf wa āda* which will be discussed in section 2.3

¹² A popular notion persists that the majority of the armies of the Arab conquests were made up of Bedouin, this despite the Qur’anic hostility to the ‘*arāb*’ as it calls nomads, and the settled origins of most of the *Sahaba*, the companions of the Prophet (Asad 1973, Hourani 1981).

¹³ Formally then to be ‘Arab’ can be seen as to be within such a reckoning of genealogy, and by extension to be part of a *qabīlah*. Those ‘*ashā’ir*’ and *qaba’il* who claim a known genealogy are *asīl*. ‘True’ Arab *qaba’il* are in formal genealogy all said to derive from two apical lineages, from *Qahtan* and *Adnan*, although in fact these meta-categories were probably the invention of Umayyad military reforms (Kennedy 1997), connected to the two ‘factions’ – *Qais* and *Yaman* that exist across the Arabic-speaking Middle East and which were used as frameworks for all manner of local disputes, much like the Ghibellines and Guelphs of Medieval Italy.

¹⁴ This linguistic valourisation is not new. During the Abbasid Caliphate, the 9th CE century Basra school of grammarians and poets wrote that an essential part of becoming a scholar of Arabic was to spend time with nomadic Bedouin, whose Arabic was considered the purest (al-Asma’ī, 1953).

category below the admittedly highly significant ‘Jordanian’ or even ‘Arab’, they mostly used *Badu*, a term used proudly to claim continuity with a valourised past. Others in Jordan and elsewhere favour ‘*A’rāb*, the Qur’anic term for Arabic-speaking nomads, (etymologically related to ‘Arab’) or occasionally as *Urbān*.¹⁵ In Jordan these have commonly though not universally come to refer to those with a longer history of settled life, or whose recent ancestors were nomadic or semi-nomadic sheep or goat-herders, while only those with recent camel-herding, desert-dwelling origins are most properly *Badu*. Elsewhere and in other contexts the emphasis is not placed on nomadism but ‘tribalism’, with terms like *qabīly* or ‘*ashirī*’ favoured. As Chatty (2014) points out, this latter term is favoured by former mobile pastoralists in Lebanon’s Beqaa valley, where *Badu* is considered an insulting, primitivising term, in part as a response to the French colonial and Lebanese state’s greater developmental antipathy for nomadism. In Jordan, where various forms of tribe and family association are ubiquitous, being ‘*ashirī*’ has a very wide meaning, contextually applicable to much of the population.

Bedouin thus has a particular set of meanings in Jordan, emerging from particular histories and relationships discussed at length later, which makes it a quite different term here than in, say Lebanon or Egypt, where it is rarely used as a self-identifier. In the south of Jordan, ideas of lawlessness, heritage, tourism work, and poverty might predominate, but in Madaba, more recent and material stereotypes are around social conservatism, rural life, large families, a supposed tendency to get things done through unofficial channels and to favour relatives and associates (though this is in no way unique to them, being common throughout Jordan) and yet conversely to rely on state employment. There are also associations with taking matters of ‘honour’ seriously, and potentially being more willing to commit organised acts of collective violence or resistance. Those identifying or identified as Bedouin are diverse in their practice of Islam, political orientation and socio-economic standing, and they are in most ways undifferentiated from other residents, notwithstanding some physical traits being

¹⁵ Layne (1994) follows Lila Abu-Lughod in preferring the term ‘*A’rāb* rather than Bedouin (although the latter used both interchangeably) – a term with which Layne’s informants identified, but which also she suggests, has less baggage. Yet Layne at times follows a local distinction which treats *Badu* and ‘*A’rāb* separately, as when she states ‘Agriculture played a greater role for the ‘*arāb* tribes who utilised the valley than for Bedouin tribes such as the Beni Sakhr or the Rwala’ (Layne, 1994:40). Unlike Abu-Lughod and Layne, I found my interlocutors used the term *Badu* much more frequently than ‘*A’rāb*, which may reflect a genuine difference in self-identification between Bani Sakhr and Layne’s hosts among the ‘Abbadi (the latter certainly practiced settled agriculture far earlier than the Bani Sakhr), but may also be in part a change in the emphasis of identity in contemporary Jordan, and may reflect my own positionality.

considered especially '*Badawy*'. Older practices of dress, and of men wearing their hair long, have largely disappeared in the Madaba region (unlike in the South), although older Bedouin men still wear traditional Arabic dress more commonly than many other Jordanians. Among the young men I knew best, certain cultural items, such as pop music from the Gulf, military style clothes, and even styles of facial hair were sometimes said, often half-jokingly, to be 'Bedouin', as were food preferences. Various Facebook groups, associated with specific '*ashā'ir*', make use of various Arabic phrases and images considered Bedouin, of horses, camels, 4x4 vehicles, guns, falcons. More than these loose associations though, is a widespread social knowledge that certain places 'belong' to or are strongly associated with named entities, and that if such an entity is *Badawy* this association is particularly important.

In Jordan the royal house has consistently favoured some Bedouin for military and government employment. Herders (or herd-owners, as shepherding was often an activity given to the poorest) seemed to have a set of military and cultural resources that made them both potentially dangerous and valuable to a would-be dynasty, and in Jordan they came to be cast in some ways as something akin to the loyalist 'martial races' of the Raj. As such, alongside the Christian property-owners, many (but by no means all) of the suburban Bedouin families in Madaba are economically-dependent on active or retired military officers, policemen and civil servants, and form a sort of heterogenous category of 'respectable people' roughly analogous to European concepts of an aspirational 'middle class', contextually distinguished from more recent arrivals.

Certain forms of hierarchical distinction and power relations have historically, held sway in the Bedouin villages, and these still have resonance around Madaba. An '*ashīrah*' generally possesses one or more lineages of particular prominence and from which leaders emerge. These leaders, called *shaykh*, wield influence at different scales and levels.¹⁶ Shaykhs tended to serve as leaders in war but also as representatives and mediators with outside forces, on behalf of their categories, allowing them to claim to represent them in their dealings with states. It is thus often a dignitary that has been

¹⁶ 'Shaykh' (plural *shuyyukh/mashayakh*) stems from an Arabic root meaning 'elder' and is used as a religious title across the Islamic world (*shaykh ad-dīn*). The title of shaykh is suggestive of an often loose and ill-defined type of conditional and consultative authority and status. The shaykh-hood is normally attached to certain lineages but not necessarily chosen by strict primogeniture, and the claim most widely acknowledged tended historically to be that of whoever within the lineage had the greatest reputation, wealth or success in war. These leaders are not evenly spread throughout the social structure of '*ashā'ir*'; some '*ashā'ir*' do not have a shaykh, or have several shaykhs at lower levels with none paramount. For instance among the Sukhur the Mutirāt have no shaykhs but several senior respected lineages, while the generally less powerful Dahamshah have several.

either awarded or ratified by urban governments, especially in the case of paramount shaykhs (*shaykh mashayyakh*).¹⁷ In the case of the Bani Sakhr, the *‘ashīrah* al-Fayiz had this role, gained during the late Ottoman period due in part to their role in the Hajj caravan (Alon 2016), and then confirmed by the Mandate and the early independent state of Jordan. The king still has a role in legitimising these figures. The Bani Hamida have no paramount shaykh, unlike the Sukhur, but possess two widely known shaykhly lineages which are considered preminent – the Ja’maani and the Brizāt.

Shaykhs were, and sometimes still are, also often involved prominently in dispute resolution, sometimes being known judges themselves, and as guarantors of contracts and oaths. While the role of the shaykh has become less central in recent years, the greater wealth, status, influence and reputation of those families descended from shaykhly lineages persists. Often the position of these families as claimed representatives of wider groups allowed them to gain favourable treatment and employment from the state, as well as benefiting particularly in some cases from land registration (discussed in Chapter 3). Alongside and sometimes overlapping with shaykhs, late Ottoman and colonial authorities made use of state-registered village notaries, often hereditary, known as a *mukhtar* (literally ‘chosen’), who in practice have by now become a non-specific title of dignity, much like shaykh. These days, other families who have become rich or politically influential, perhaps through high military or government rank, or who gain a reputation elsewhere, often wield as much influence as these older titled forms, and often ape their forms, especially in terms of hospitality. Together with judges and the heads of extended families these men of influence and reputation are known as the *kubār*, the ‘great’, a relational term that can apply to different scales (the *kubār* among the Dahamshah are lesser than those famous enough to be *kubār* among the Bani Sakhr as a whole). In general parlance, but not without resistance from some quarters, the *kubār* also, and now primarily consists of, those men and women who gain influence, reputation and wealth professionally, and thus might be in a position to give favours to clients; such as wealthy business owners, officials and politicians. As a loosely defined category of notables, these are the people it is worth knowing and asking favours from, a form of patronage which extends to business dealings.

¹⁷ Paramount shaykhs were often largely nominal and historically the largest-level groups have rarely ever done anything entirely together, although oral narratives of great inter-tribal wars often centre on such figures (see Meeker 1979).

In Madaba, streets, districts and businesses tend to be owned or patronised by specific categories of people, who reproduce various wider conceptual geographies within the town, as well as reproducing relations of patronage. The centre (*wasat al-balad*) is owned mostly by Christian landlords, while the north-east is mostly considered to be Bani Sakhr, and thus Bedouin, in character, with shops, coffeehouses and services used by these families. The flat where my wife Jennie (who accompanied me during fieldwork) and I lived was at the interface of these areas, near a small coffeehouse, *gahwah al-qurīyah* ('the village cafe') frequented by my Sukhur friends whenever in town. The south-west of the town, meanwhile, contained businesses and venues frequented by my Hamaydah interlocutors. In Madaba my interlocutors' families (especially mothers) warned my wife and I against shopping at Carrefour (the largest supermarket in Madaba) for our everyday groceries, urging me instead to visit the various small family-owned shops with which they had built up a relationship of trust and loyalty over many years. Living in Madaba involved occasional and often bewildering visions of the different conceptual geographies that made the town and its surroundings meaningful but fraught for its inhabitants.

Madaba as a modern municipality came into being in the late nineteenth century, when families from three Christian '*ashā'ir*' fleeing a political feud in Karak to the south settled in the abandoned Late Antique site of Madaba, officially registering the ruins and surrounding land with the Ottoman Governors in Nablus and Damascus in 1880 (Abu Jaber 1989), leading to a wave of land registration and villagisation among surrounding (mostly pastoralist) populations who feared that if they did not settle on and register land, they would lose it (Rogan 2002:79-82).

Meanwhile the poorer southern part of the Governorate is dominated by another category of Bedouin, the *qabīlah* of the Bani Hamida. It is a semi-autonomous district (*nahīyah*) centred on the town of Dhiban (population 7,000) and including the scattered villages in the mountainous area east of the Dead Sea – called the Jabal Bani Hamida. South of Dhiban the deep ravine and escarpments of the Wadi Mujib separates Madaba from Karak (although the Bani Hamida *dira* stretches onto the southern Karaki side).

As one travels eastwards out of Madaba, the land slopes upwards in a series of low ridges – green in the spring and brown and dusty in the summer and autumn, dotted with herds of goats, sheep and the bright orange plastic coverings of the tents of pastoralists. Increasingly these slopes are also dotted with pylons, houses, and enclosed irrigated orchards and olive trees. This undulating and semi-cultivated steppe-land

between two of Jordan's major highways (the so-called 'Desert Highway' to the east and the 'King's Highway' to the west) slowly becomes more arid, and beyond the Desert Highway and the Airport, settlement and agriculture peter out into the Eastern Desert, and eventually more or less cease in the black basalt desert. Throughout this area lies a network of small villages, often called the Sukhur or even just the 'Bedouin villages' (*qura badawīyah*) by people in Madaba, running in a rough arc over 150 km to the south and east of Amman down as far as Wadi Mujib. Most of these were registered by Sukhur Shaykhs in the late nineteenth century under the Ottomans or during the British Mandate's registration process in the 1920s and 1930s. They began as agricultural estates owned by shaykhs, with seasonal houses for the central lineages and populated by slaves and migrant agricultural workers, but as sedenterisation picked up pace in the 1950s and 1960s many Sukhur families, now more reliant on government salaries and pensions than pastoralism, began to build permanent homes there. As tarmacked roads, running water, electricity, schools and medical services arrived in a trickle in these villages in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, more Sukhur moved from seasonal to permanent village homes. The old, small stone houses of the core have been abandoned by their original families, given to poorer relations, and then to hired agricultural workers or financially employed shepherds, and finally in many cases repurposed as livestock shelters, stores, or just abandoned. Instead over the last three decades a profusion of cinderblock and concrete houses has sprung up, sometimes faced in stone or plaster, built piecemeal and expanded room by room and floor by floor, each crowned with unfinished concrete columns and metal wires proudly declaring more floors to come.

Pastoralism is still very much in evidence in these villages; a landscape of flocks and tents. Trucks and irrigation pumps have made the range needed to support herds smaller, and so mobility has become less essential. Though in some ways 'easier' now, pastoralism has become economically marginal compared to military pensions and government jobs, all encouraging settled life. In many of the families I know, life-history interviews revealed a pattern whereby one brother of the generation born since settlement was given the dwindling family flocks, of goats, sheep, and in a few cases camels and horses (the latter often share-owned between a number of families, given their high value). This brother and his descendants, often chosen because of lower educational attainment or a failure to find employment elsewhere, often see a rising gap in living standards between them and their wider families employed elsewhere. These

flocks, which had once been the main form of wealth, are now a liability, especially since feed subsidies have declined, but symbolically and socially they remain important for occasions where meat is needed. Now the national market for domestic meat and dairy is small and outcompeted by imports (except during the high season of *‘Eīd al-Adha*). Goats and sheep have largely replaced camels as the most economically important species, and numbers remain small – apart from a few large commercial herds they are generally 10-60 animals. Most production is geared towards the local and domestic, with only seasonal excesses sold, though dairy in the spring is sold to travelling *jaban*, milk-traders who collect milk from across wide areas to supply larger processing centres. Large commercial herds, some still owned by Bedouin families, are managed now by hired shepherds, often Egyptian agricultural labourers, or in recent years Rwala Bedouin refugees from Syria.

These villages are still usually associated with a key *‘ashīrah* or sometimes even a single agnatic lineage. In wealth, appearance and land value the Bedouin villages vary considerably. In most cases villages have a small independently-owned shop (*dukhān* – lit. ‘smoke’), elementary schools and in larger villages secondary schools (one each for girls and boys), sometimes a health clinic and always at least one mosque – usually recently built, often with Gulf money. As an area of lightly inhabited and agriculturally increasingly marginal land close to the capital, it is a zone of potential urban expansion. Among the villages there are also non-village structures; large commercial arboriculture farms, occasional light industrial units, riding stables, and near the highway a private university (al-Israh) and the international airport. In the north, on a dual carriageway lined with shops, malls and drive-in businesses, is the village of Um al-’Amad, dominated by the vast *dīwān* (semi-public guestroom and gathering hall) and gleaming mansions of the Fayiz shaykhly lineage, often considered the paramount *‘ashīrah* of the Bani Sakhr. Further north and east the large village of al-Muwaqqar is associated with the Khraisha shaykhs of the wider Ka’abnah and rivals with al-Fayiz for overall paramountcy. Further south the villages of Jalul, Huwara and Tunayab are mostly inhabited by the Zabn *‘ashīrah*. In the centre lie villages of the Dahamshah and Mutirāt – two closely related *‘ashīrah* regarded as of a broader category of the Gubaīn along with al-Faiyz: Um al-Walid, Natal, Hraij, Dulaīlat Mutirāt. These Gubaīn and the Zabn together form in turn a still broader category, the at-Twag, who are the main rival grouping to the Ka’abnah. Further south, the large village of Um ar-Rassas and its surrounding settlements are the home of the Ka’abah and Hagaīsh Bani Sakhr, while the

village of ar-Ramma is inhabited by the Salaytah, an '*ashīrah*' allied to and now registered for electoral purposes as Bani Sakhr, but long regarded as a separate independent '*ashīrah*' of several thousand people.

The categories of named groups in the above description are not the only or even necessarily always the most relevant identifiers of people and places. They are widely known so that even passing taxi drivers can say 'this is a Ka'abnah village', coming into their own during celebratory gatherings and political meetings. The overall large division of Ka'abneh and at-Twag was once politically central, as a framework in which many local alliances and disputes were accommodated. Now such divisions are still talked about occasionally, especially genealogically, but for many younger people with an interest in such matters, being 'Bani Sakhr' or even 'Bedouin', as an implied identity connected to a noble heritage, has become the emphasised level of categorisation. Yet for much of daily life, especially for those living or working outside the village, other categorical labels, identifiers and claims on solidarity may well be more important; based on age, socio-economic class, employment, religious observance (such as praying at a certain mosque or following a certain cleric or theology) or through education or work. However this series of names connected to specific places has a discursive, political and indeed legal-bureaucratic existence emphasised beyond these others by the state, in ways discussed in the next chapter. Crucial for my argument here though is the point that like being 'tribal', these sort of names and places have often been rendered in anthropological and indeed general scholarly discourse as basically defined by 'kinship', with residence, socio-political organisation, and conceptual identity all determined by descent and relatedness. Such associations are sometimes, it seems to me, behind a tendency in some work to either ignore such settings, or else to explicitly deny that concepts like being part of an '*ashīrah*' or being Bedouin are relevant in contemporary life. I do not intend here to rehearse the well-known anthropological critique of such associations. But throughout this dissertation I will show that while ideas of genealogy and agnition are conceptually significant, the true significance of tribes and Bedouin in this setting lies more in political economy, and especially specific socio-political practices and conceptions of sovereignty, and it is these factors which best account for the reproduction of notions of Bedouin and tribe in contemporary Jordan.

Figure 1.1: Map of field site showing main villages. Inset map of Jordan for context. Map produced by Jennie Williams.

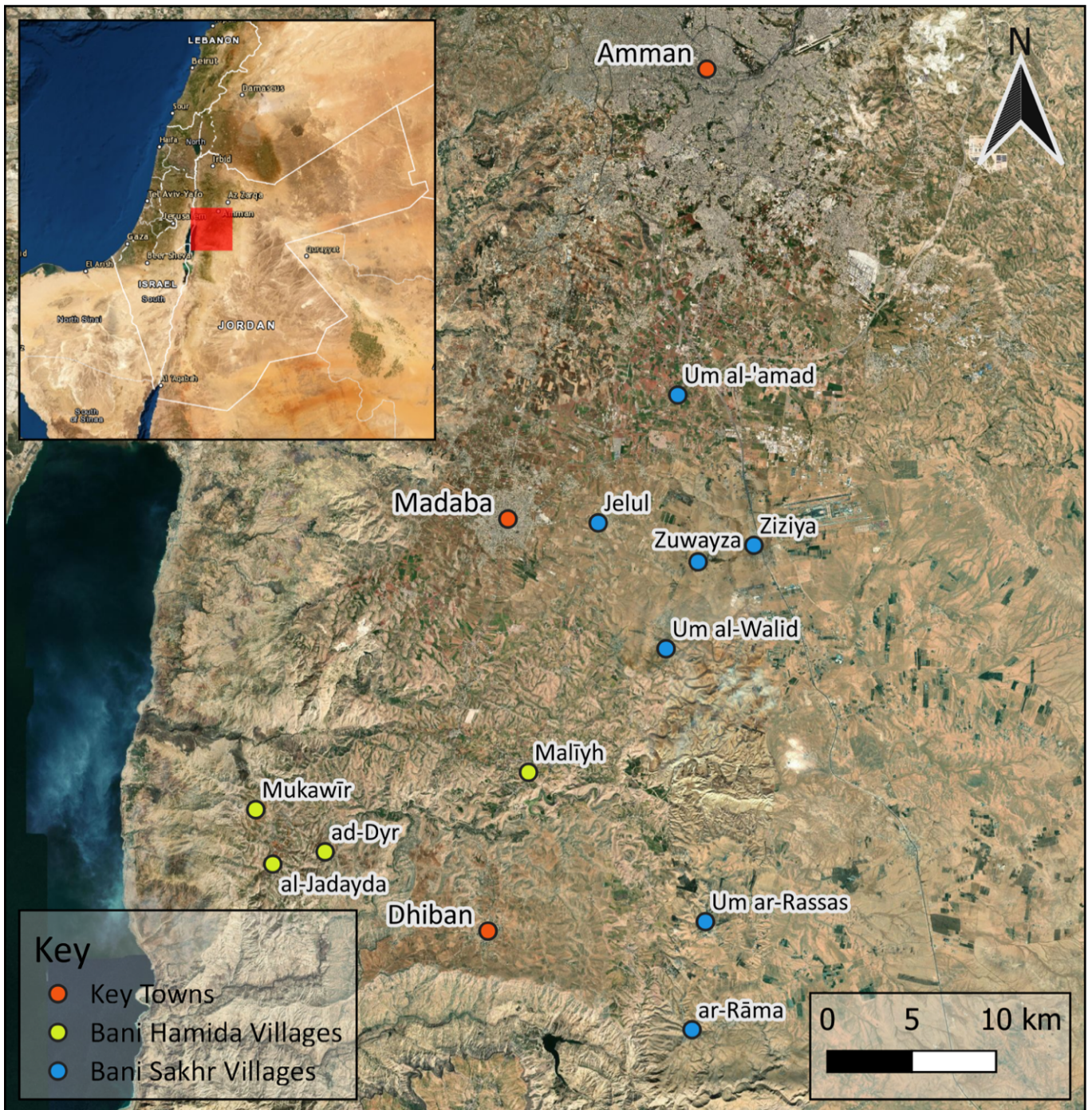


Figure 1.2 and 1.3: New houses and old ruins in Um al-Walid, the Dahamshah Bani Sakhr village in which many of my interlocutors lived, and where I visited and stayed often. In Figure 1.2 (top) my friend Hamid (left), who commutes daily to his job at the Ministry of Finance in Amman, walks away from his older cousin Abu Ahmed (right), who still works as a herder. Photo by Jennie Williams. In Figure 1.3 (bottom) Hamid and his older brother Abdalaziz show me the new house their family is building.



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1.2 Into the Field

After spending an initial three months establishing contacts and improving my Arabic while a scholar at the British Institute in Amman (BIA CBRL) I moved with my wife to Madaba. My time in Amman had been spent in language classes, libraries and archives, and making and conducting relatively formal introductions and interviews with (generally wealthy and highly educated) Amman-based contacts.¹⁸ On moving I entered a new, less elite world. Through renting a flat from a Christian landlord, we also got to know the Christian families of Madaba. I returned to Madaba for two months in the winter of 2018-2019, staying with friends, while a research affiliate at the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Research, commuting daily to the capital like many other students and workers in the towns and villages of Madaba.

Given my research interests, the Bani Sakhr villages around Madaba had seemed an obvious place to be. I had originally aspired to rooted, intimate 'village' ethnography. But the young men I got to know spent much of their time outside the villages, even if they lived there, and the centre of their social world tended to be Madaba. While many older ethnographies look out from a small village towards towns, cities and nations, this looks instead outwards from a town towards a periphery of villages and semi-arid pastureland which remain the notional social bedrock and origin for many inhabitants in the town. Many families I got to know had moved to the town from their villages, as a more affordable alternative to Amman but with better economic opportunities than the villages (and with a much shorter commute to Amman).

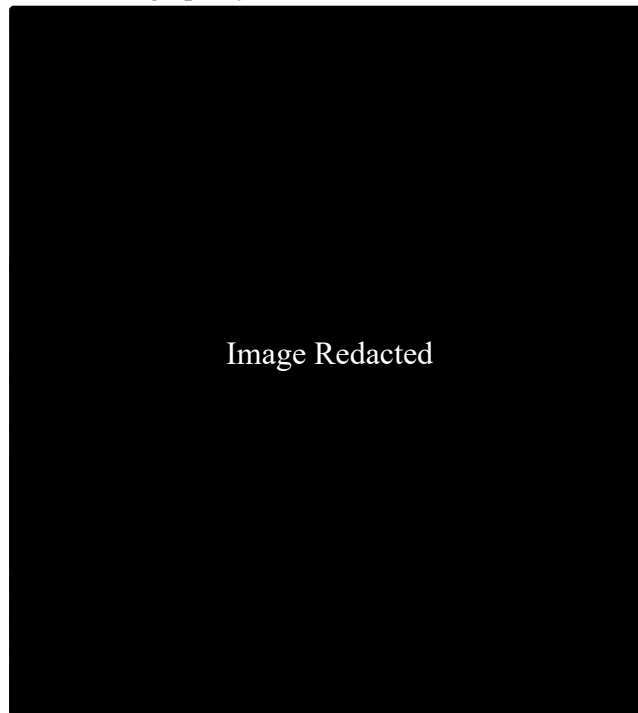
In December, while still living in Amman, a friend of mine who had made several Bani Sakhr friends whilst he was a student at the University of Jordan invited me to come and meet them at a coffeehouse in Madaba. After explaining who I was and something of my research I arranged to move to Madaba in the new year after they helped me track down a landlord with a flat to rent. In the initial weeks two of these, Hamid Dahamshah and Marwan Mutirāt, began to meet with me regularly, initially in coffeehouses, and increasingly in my home, which resulted in reciprocal invitations to

¹⁸ Among these were many figures who feature here as cited sources and as interlocutors. Dr Ahmed Oweidi al-'Abbadi, a key interlocutor of Andrew Shryock, a Bedouin historian and anthropologist, as well as an opposition political leader; Dr Raouf Abu Jaber (who died in 2020), a nonagenarian historian of land settlement in the nineteenth century Balga, but also a scion of the Abu Jaber family who had a key part in bringing this history about; Dr Sara Ababneh, a political scientist working on protests and labour movements while also taking part in them, employing other protesters as research assistants. I also conducted interviews with various Jordanian and foreign employees of NGOs and of the World Bank (see Wojnarowski forthcoming 2021).

visit their families. Marwan, who had graduated in 2015 with a degree in English Literature from the University of Jordan (the country's most prestigious and oldest University) now worked as a secondary school teacher in the village of Um ar-Rassas. Marwan was also deeply interested in history, archaeology and the genealogy and oral history of the Bani Sakhr. He was also an administrator for the online 'Bani Sakhr at the University of Jordan' Facebook group. Marwan's family, headed by his now-retired father Ibrahim, lived in Madaba, where his family had built a house in the Sukhur-dominated suburb of Hanina. Before that they had lived since settling permanently for the first time in the 1950s in the village of Dulaīlat, also called Dulaīlat Mutirāt. Hamid, an orphan, lived in an extended compound of concrete houses in the village of Um al-Walid, with his five brothers. The older two were military officers, (one, Saif, a captain in the Royal Guard). Hamid studied at the small, private University of Israh, considered less prestigious than public universities. His brothers paid for his studies in business administration and law, but as he was not excelling at them, he was under pressure to find a job.

Through these two initial contacts I slowly entered a wider social world of university friends, people who greeted us or sat with us in the coffeeshop, and those introduced to me on visits to the villages. I also regularly accompanied Hamid to class at Israh University, getting to know his friends and drinking coffee with them while he was in lectures. My wife Jennie also began accompanying us on invitations to village families. Often young men, who assumed she must want female companionship, arranged for their sisters and mothers to invite her to visit, giving her impromptu cooking lessons. Most Fridays we either went to visit friends in the villages or met friends from Madaba at the Friday market – the *suq al-juma'a*. One of these, Khalil Hagaish, who lived in a village near Wadi Mujib, over an hour south, and studied at Israh for an accountancy degree, would take us on extended visits to villages. Hamid's family, under financial pressure, had sold their horses and other animals a few years ago, but Hamid and some of his friends, who were keen riders, spent a great deal of time hanging around a couple of commercial stables, owned by rich people from the capital. By getting to know staff there (indeed the manager Hussein al-Fayiz was a Sukhur student from Israh as well) they were able to ride for free out of hours, and also drink coffee and cook over fires in the stable yard.

Figure 1.4: Bedouin Masculinity; Hamid Dahamshah shows off his equestrian skills, asking us to post the picture online. Photograph by Jennie Williams.



Often though, when no activity or entertainment was to hand, these young men just wandered around Madaba, greeting people they knew on the street or in shops. Through such wonderings I got to know a number of shopkeepers and other denizens of the *sug* and became something of a known entity in the town. We often stopped at a shoe shop managed by a distant maternal cousin of Hamid and Marwan, Badr ash-Shammari. I started visiting on my own as a place to go and talk with people, and soon Badr, the same age as me, began inviting my wife and I to visit his family home regularly. Badr's family, a shaykhly lineage of the large trans-nation Shammar *qabīlah*, were one of a very small number of Shammar in the area, and had close connections of marriage and friendship with Bani Sakhr families. They came to the Madaba region following a feud in Najd in the nineteenth century, as exiles seeking protection with the Mutirāt. The exiles have become permanent residents and are often considered to be Mutirāt themselves now, although Badr's family still proudly called themselves Shammari and maintained links to other Shammar groups and organisations in Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Iraqi relatives visited often. Badr's father's house in Hanina featured a large and important *dīwān*, a semi-public guestroom – described in section 4.5. Badr was often uninterested in visiting this space, but sitting and talking here with Badr's father became a regular evening activity for me.

On arriving in Madaba, having enquired about learning better *badawī* Arabic, I was directed to Samer Shuwabkah, who worked as a translator at the Ministry of the

Interior. Samer lived in the village of Juraynah north of Madaba, and was from a small ‘*ashīrah*’ called Shuwabkah, small enough that this family used it as their family name as well. Samer started as a teacher, sitting down for a couple of hours twice a week in a coffeehouse or in his parent’s house to drill us on various idiomatic expressions and turns of phrase so that our Arabic sounded less stilted. When he found out I was interested in history, old proverbs and stories and in talking about politics and economics we began to also meet socially to talk. He was interested in my research and offered to help. As well as countless acts of both cultural and linguistic translation at various points of confusion, Samer also patiently listened and offered his opinion on much that I had observed or thought about during fieldwork, becoming a key research collaborator and friend.

Through a chance meeting while walking in the countryside we also came to know the Karaiznah family, from the Salaytah ‘*ashīrah*. Khalid, an enthusiastic Municipal Ministry employee with a side-line working as a fixer and local host for a lucrative adventure tourism business offering wadi-swimming and climbing on his family’s land to mostly foreign Arab tourists, was smoking beside the road with some of his younger cousins when we walked by. An invitation to smoke and drink tea, as so often in Jordan, led to an invitation to eat at his home in the village of ar-Rama, where we met his older brothers and relatives, including Salah, who became important interlocutors. We reciprocated, hosting his wife and children. Over the following months we spent many days, weekends and weeks as their guests in ar-Rama, including ‘*Eīd al-Fitr*’ in June 2018. I also spent much time with Khalid’s brother ‘Ali. He worked as a shepherd with his family’s small remaining pooled flock, following the pattern mentioned above. He did not have a high school diploma and had thus failed to get a government or military job. He moved the dwindling flocks across a large range of pastures, setting up a small tarpaulin tent where he would spend most of his time, though he mostly slept in the village with his family. Every few days, another brother who owned a water tanker filled up his troughs and barrels. ‘Ali also worked as a professional shepherd looking after the flocks of other people, often in return for grazing rights on their land. Khalid died tragically in March 2020. His friendship and wise advice have been sorely missed while finalising this text. He was, unlike most of my young male interlocutors, able to adopt us into a world of family intimacy, and through that into the life of their village, an experience of gracious hospitality and intimacy that placed other encounters into a richer context.

Figure 1.5: Khalid Karaīznah with his brother ‘Ali’s flock outside the village of ar-Rama. Photograph by the author.

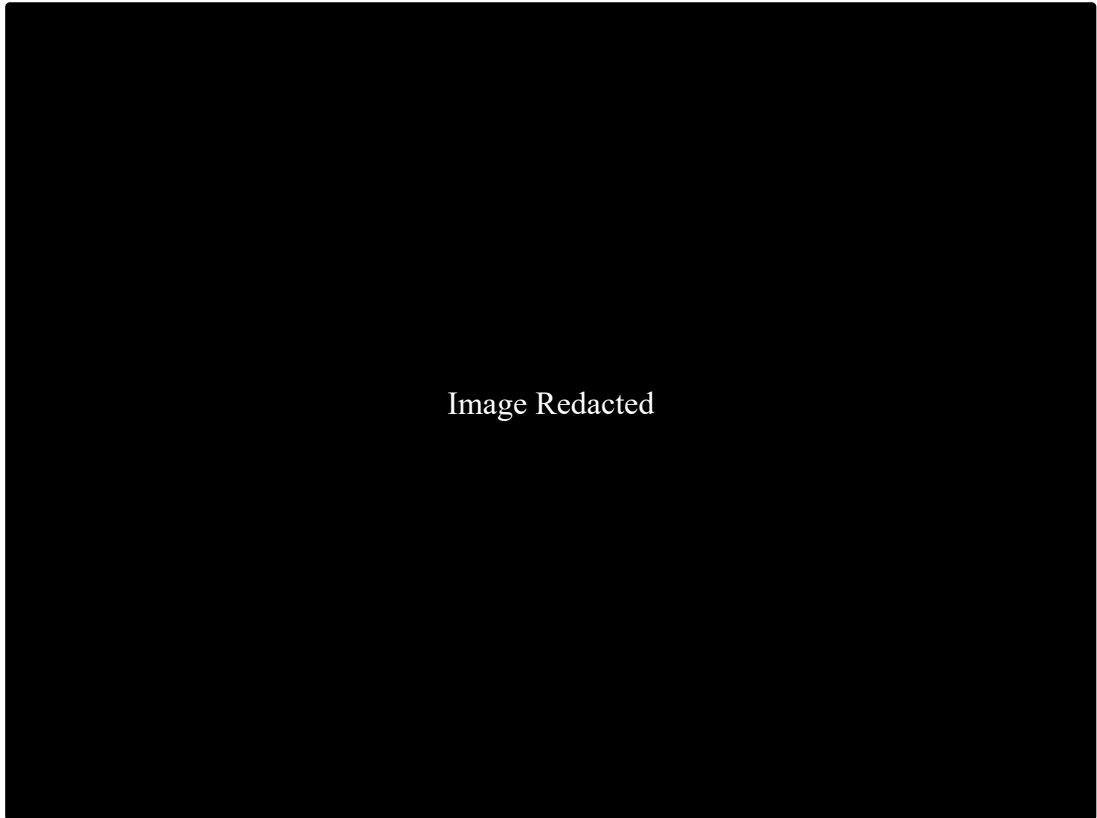
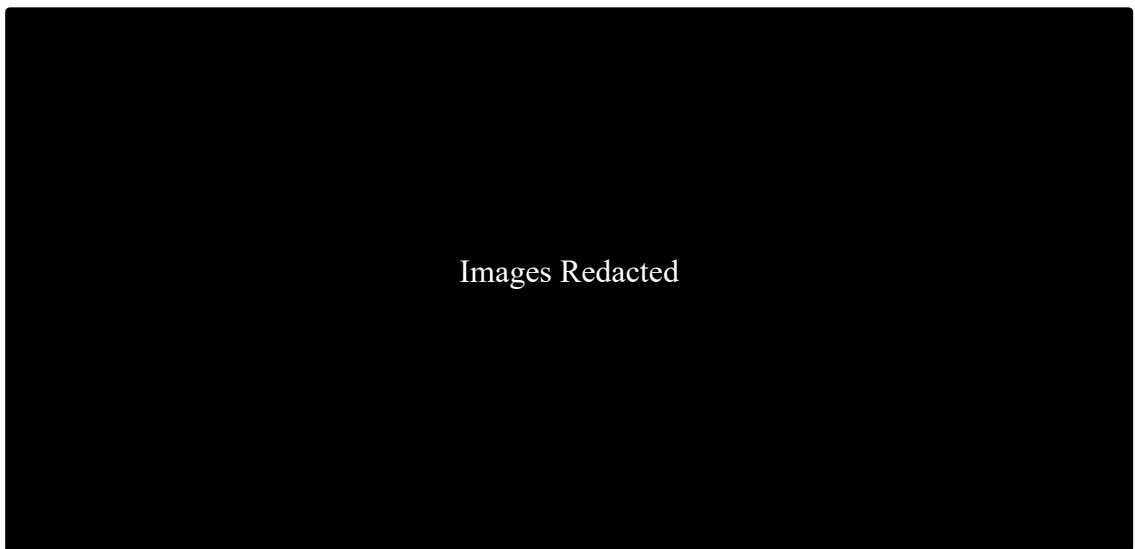


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Figure 1.6 Left: ‘Ali’s flock ready for milking. Figure 1.7 Right: B’dul boy looks after goats in Um Sayhūn. Photographs by the author.



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From early on in 2018 I became increasingly interested in the experiences of those from the other major category of Bedouin within the Madaba region, the Bani Hamida. During my time in Amman when I explained my research interests, I was often asked if I knew about the *Hirak* protests in Dhiban, and if I would be studying it. This was one of a number of popular rural protest groups that had emerged in the 2000s and come to prominence during the mass unrest of 2011, with links to broad leftist labour

movements as well as self-consciously ‘tribal’ political groups. At several meetings with Jordanian political scientist Sara Ababneh, she encouraged me to take an interest in labour politics and protests, and introduced me to a number of contacts in the Dhiban Hirak, who she had worked with in her own research on gender and political protest (see Ababneh 2018). Key among these, Osama al-Hisa, a young man from a Bani Hamida family from Dhiban but now living in Madaba with his parents and sisters, facilitated my introduction to the Dhiban Hirak and its main figures and spokesmen. I also took an increasing interest in the rural Jabal Bani Hamida area, which was the site of a community development NGO (The Bani Hamida Weaving Project) which included a women’s weaving cooperative. This area, with a history of poverty, insecure land tenure, and failed developmental initiatives, seemed to present a very different political environment from the Sukhur villages and Madaba itself, and although connected by close family ties to the town of Dhiban, this rural setting had seen little involvement in Hirak.

Through the Bani Hamida NGO’s manager, Halima Abu Qa’ida (who also sat as a local councillor) I was introduced to a wide range of families, both beneficiaries and those unconnected to the project. My wife Jennie, who accompanied me for this element of fieldwork (facilitating access to female-centred spaces) and I had many enjoyable days with Halima driving from house to house, meeting the women weavers of Jabal Bani Hamida, as well as their families, and the key local dignitaries, the shaykhs and *mukhtars*. Halima throughout helped answer questions and explain my presence to these interlocutors, as well as filling me in with genealogical and local knowledge between visits. Halima also talked about her own role in local politics on the local council, and the slow extension of state services into the area since the 1990s. Beginning with these house visits, I began to develop a set of questions and interests around life histories and social change, examining experiences of sedenterisation, house-building and changing modes of subsistence and resource sharing among older, often female interlocutors, which I ended up repeating in Sukhur villages and in the Shuwabkah village of Juraynah. I thus pursued these two separate but interconnected lines of ethnographic enquiry in the Hamaydah areas. These, and my research with young Sukhur men in Madaba came together frequently at various points of connection, through people whose networks extended between these settings, and through the town of Madaba itself, a place where I regularly bumped into people from all three strands of fieldwork. More broadly, certain similarities and illuminating differences in the experience of the

political economy emerge from considering these as two, or rather perhaps three interconnected network-settings; Sukhur villages, Hamaydah villages, and Hirak activists.

I had settled upon Madaba early in my research and although other options presented themselves in the early months of fieldwork, it remained my focus.¹⁹ As a setting it seemed at once important and understudied; a central but peripheral place within Jordan, neither north nor south. The north of the Balga region had been the ethnographic subject of Andrew Shryock's (1997) significant monograph, and Shryock's student Geoffrey Hughes has continued to conduct ethnographic work there and in Amman. Meanwhile, the south of Jordan (where I conducted research for my Master's) has a very different political economy and relationship to the state, and the disrupting dynamic of well-established 'desert' tourism, which has already been given considerable ethnographic attention (Chatelard 2005, Bille 2012). The governorate of Madaba seemed to concentrate in a small area a particularly interesting set of historical and ethnographic issues. It is an area at once close enough to the capital to function as a dormitory settlement and economic periphery, and yet at the same time many places remain discursively 'tribal'.

When conducting my Master's fieldwork on a community of Bedouin resettled in the 1980s to make way for the establishment of Petra as a major tourist site, I passed through Um al-'Amad, a village near Madaba on my way back to Amman in 2012. I witnessed pro-government supporters of Faisal al-Fayiz, a former Prime Minister who had made a speech calling for loyalty to the king during the widespread protests then sweeping the region. Faisal intervened, I was told, not as a former minister, but in his role as a member of the shaykhly lineage of an important Bedouin tribe, and grandson of the shaykh of shaykhs Mithqal al-Fayiz. His intervention was taken seriously because of its potential to mobilise people via a broad category of over a hundred thousand people – the Bani Sakhr. Reflecting on this quite different manifestation of the 'Bedouin' in contemporary Jordan, I began to think the Bani Sakhr might prove an interesting topic for further research. In 2016 the historian Yoav Alon published a biography of Mithqal al-Fayiz, which gave an account of his family's rise to national prominence (Alon 2016). Meeting Alon later that year, we talked about the nature of his evidence, and the importance, but also limitations, of his work's 'shaykh's-eye' view. He suggested to me the analytical use of a project that considered how the same history

¹⁹ Including an offer of residence in Sawaya, the 'Abbadi village of Dr Ahmed Oweidi al-'Abbadi.

and political positionality looked to non-elite, younger individuals from other less prominent lineages still considered ‘of’ the Bani Sakhr. This project informed my research when beginning fieldwork, and has remained in the background throughout.

Yet predictably, my focus was rapidly transformed through fieldwork. In particular, the increasing focus on the experience of youth and protest in rural settings came to the fore. I came to see various types of demonstrative collective action to be key to my interests in how and why claims to solidarity are made and contested. I also came to realise how much my research was underlain by changing relationships to land ownership. I thus began to turn towards archival and oral historical sources.

1.3 Locating Gender

I have mentioned that most of my interlocutors are male and that the conceptual geography I have sketched above is a gendered one. This has serious implications for my work, both theoretical and methodological. The ‘*ashīrah*’ as a concept turns around the shared honour of certain inter-related older men from important lineages. This is in some ways and in some places changing rapidly, as we shall see, but nevertheless this remains a significant fact, and intersects with wider dynamics of gender in Jordan. Yet the gendered dimension is not a timeless constant. The emphasis on men and male honour, and male protection of (and thus sovereignty over) female bodies, has persisted throughout periods of history in which actual lived experiences of gender and the expectations placed on women have varied considerably. In the early twentieth century, my interlocutors told me, women owned and built the tents which were the main type of accommodation, worked outside the home as herders, farmers and occasionally traders, and ran the home and hosted guests when their male relatives were away (often for months at a time). Now land and houses are mostly male-owned in the Bedouin villages. Ideals of gender segregation in settings of hospitality have remained, and in practice increased. It was common for most women in Madaba go to different places at different times to men, frequently make decisions based on the criteria of avoiding gossip or bringing shame to their family, and keep much of their social lives segregated. Even though many women work, the semi-private social world of hospitality and entertaining is, as we will see, still segregated in many households. My young unmarried interlocutors tended, with time, to introduce me to their female relations, but cautiously and slowly. Older women with a large degree of control within households

often led in hosting and welcoming us and formed the core subjects of my life-history interviews. However given the underlying social expectations inherent in this setting, my time, as a young male stranger, was largely spent with other young men. The younger women I knew best were usually those from wealthy, well-travelled, urban or Christian households. My wife Jennie had access to the female-centred guestrooms and domestic spaces of some of my interlocutors' homes, and through her and Halima, as a well-respected public figure and gatekeeper, I was able to sometimes cross gendered thresholds and meet the women of households on their own terms.

All of this may suggest that these gendered boundaries were fixed and obvious structures. In fact they were contested, fluid, contextually redefined and blurred by individual practices and (for me) often unpredictable.²⁰ I met with and got to know many women even in self-consciously 'conservative' or pious families. In other settings, visiting the families of young men who in talk often espoused revolutionary and emancipatory political opinions, including around gender and sexuality, I would witness rigid segregation in front of guests and extreme secrecy regarding the presence of women in the household. In some households I never saw or knew the name of any women, in other families husband and wife would eat and host guests together, and yet in one of the latter I didn't even know of the existence of unmarried daughters until my wife told me that whenever I visited they either had to leave the small house for a neighbour's or hide in their bedroom. The role of Islam here is significant but not straightforward. Many more overtly pious and Islamic families did not practice this sort of ostentatious social segregation when at home, and had female members (wearing *hijab* but not *niqab*) in work and university, often espousing a belief in (an Islamic form of) social equality for women. Many Bedouin families that were strictly segregated were less overtly pious, and some young men who supported secular political causes were among the most sensitive to the potential shame that could befall them via their sisters. Such family differences are not easily reducible to class, origin or social setting.

Yet in Jordan, as everywhere, gender, class and colonialism intersect. 'Liberated', unveiled women are associated by many rural Jordanians with the socially atomised lives of self-consciously American emulating rich suburb dwelling West Ammanis who live in large, secluded houses behind high walls and drive everywhere in cars, isolated from the reputational risks of gossip but also the warmth and protection of

²⁰ A small example was the uncertainty Jennie and I faced whenever greeting across genders – people one imagined might prefer not to, went in for a handshake and vice-versa.

social intimacy. The immediacy and intimacy of life in villages and in crowded poor suburbs are also associated with the strong normative power of gossip, female reputation and deeply patriarchal values.

Equally, for many women current practices of piety and Islamic gender norms, especially veiling, are interpreted as a retightening following the period of change and opportunity for some (but not all) women in the 1960s and 1970s. Both this period and subsequent patriarchal counterturn were largely urban innovations. Both have had delayed effects in more rural areas, where though conceptual emphasis on the subordination and control of women was strong, until recently female seclusion was minimal given open domestic spaces and agricultural needs. As secular nationalist politics on Nasserist or Baathist lines has fallen out of popularity (or, depending on who you talk to, been driven underground), attempts to reform gender relations or ‘secularise’ popular life have seemingly become less grand and forthright, while to the consternation of some, the state enforces conservative patriarchal laws.²¹ Other types of grand scheme (to borrow Samuli Schielke’s 2015 term) have come to inform people’s lives and lived experience of gender, and a form of pious and qualified female autonomy is now often talked about by young educated women.²² More overt (and more Euro-American) forms of feminism and women’s movements have become associated with colonial and post-colonial authoritarian penetrations and performative modernity, leaving structures of patriarchal power largely unchallenged, and later the rule of quasi-secular autocrats who often pushed certain visions of secular feminism using women of their own families. More broadly, even among leftists and activists of the sort I spent time with, there is a widespread sentiment of ‘My Arab brother before my Western sister’; a phrase used to close down certain dialogues which might distract from the supposedly more important struggles against colonial, imperial and racialised oppression (and thus also to some degree closing down the topic of intersectionality).

Too much talk about gender in Arab countries can seem problematic in this discourse, providing ammunition for racist and interventionist views (Abu-Lughod 2013). Anthropology’s own role in such topics is ambivalent; ‘the field is continually

²¹ Especially egregious examples that have been subject to protest include Article 308 (finally repealed in 2017), which allows for sentences to be waived where a rapist agrees to marry his victim, and the restriction of the transmission of citizenship via patrilineal descent only, further naturalising the concept of political communities being determined by agnition. The debates around repealing these laws reveal something of the problems encountered by feminist activism in Jordan, where legal terminology does not distinguish between kidnapping and elopement (both primarily dishonouring male kin) as discussed by Werner (2004, cited in Hughes 2015:130).

²² This is a topic beyond the scope of this dissertation – see Ababneh (2009).

marking and moving away from stigmatized difference’ (Shryock and Scheele 2019:12) and towards the inclusive, socially just and politically relevant, yet the ethnographic material with which to do so is often shaped by interlocutors with ‘understandings of gender, religion, politics, kinship, and sexuality that do not conform, and are sometimes flagrantly at odds with, European and American models’ (*ibid*). Many accounts influenced by Said’s *Orientalism* tend to avoid criticism or negative portrayals of such practices out of a concern that such criticism may contribute to maintaining cultural and civilizational hierarchies. The result, as Navaro-Yashin (1999) discusses, often tends towards portraying returns or reinventions of ‘Muslim’ gender roles as authentic ‘prediscursive “truth”’, and as such beyond moral evaluation or critique. These works risk othering their Muslim subjects and tend towards rendering them as flat and lifeless.

For these reasons and others, gender is a topic I enter awkwardly and at times with discomfort. This is perhaps inevitable for a non-religious white European male from a comparatively privileged position with pretensions to sympathetic dialogue, coming to a setting where gender relations exist upon a markedly different (though not unrelated) pattern. Ideas of male corporate honour resting in the control of female bodies are both repellent and to some degree historically recognisable to Euro-American intellectuals. Scholarship on this topic tends towards a fetishised, partial, critique which obscures both the recognition implicit in it, and all that is excluded by the partiality of the focus. The question is at least partially one of emphasis; to ignore this difference in values is condescending, distorting, and misleading, while to over-emphasise or to emphasise it in a context of moral judgement is othering. This is not to say all my interlocutors and friends in Jordan or in the villages around Madaba were appalling misogynists. Nor do I wish to portray the women I knew ‘as silent shadows or as hapless victims’ as Chatty (2000:241) characterised older scholarly accounts of ‘Middle Eastern women’. I spoke to many successful, professional women, who contested and confounded the norms of a deeply patriarchal state and some local disapproval around which women from which backgrounds should work or take part in public life (see sections 5.4 and 6.4).

Nevertheless, there were areas of heightened mutual sensitivity, which I learned to enter only with caution. At the root of many relationships and interactions I had with Bedouin families was a profound divergence in views and experience of gender. Practices of female exclusion, seclusion, pressurised marriage, cheated inheritance, and what seemed from my perspective invidious masculine hypocrisy were on display, traits

criticised not only by secularists but also Islamists. As Abu-Lughod (2013) reports, many Bedouin women blame corruption and immorality for these woes (which affect men as well), not 'Islam' or Bedouin culture, while other young women seek to find ways of recasting flawed elements of these schemes as wrong interpretations. As too with Abu-Lughod's analysis, an idea of rights is central to gender discourse in Jordan, but this also serves to further cement the idea of inflexibly-established gender roles with certain (divinely-ordained) rights and characteristics.

My discomfort was greatest when dealing with utterances and behaviour I found abhorrent. As an example, a boy of fifteen told me he would shoot his sister if she tried to move out of the home before marriage to work. This statement was immediately criticised by some (but not all) his friends as morally wrong, as well as contrary to Islam. I could grasp enough of the context of this utterance to understand that this boy was making an exaggerated and dramatic claim to honour and masculine virility, showing off a cultivated prickliness and sensitivity to matters of honour that will be discussed in the next chapter, and, at least in part aware of and acting up to his expectations of a foreign audience in me. Less horrifying but still problematic was the casual misogyny and gendered moral double standard that many who I regarded as friends employed. Young men who regularly drink and who talked in a sexually explicit way about women in the street and in the media, would express mingled disgust and desire at unveiled women or women in tight jeans. Some would comment on what they would do if their sisters behaved thus. But to obsess over this field of difference has its own dangers of distortion and of reproducing a privileged gaze.

This account of discomfort might suggest the sort of 'anti-relativism' which Clifford Geertz (1984) famously opposed. Nissim-Sabat (1987:937) responded to Geertz's defence of methodological relativism as 'trivially true and profoundly false'.²³ While recent engagements with notions of the good and with ethics often do call for a more intimate and sustained examination of areas of ethical disagreement within the ethnographic process than the Geertzian 'weak' methodological relativism might normally be compatible with, this is not the approach I adopt. Often in fieldwork I felt

²³ Nissim-Sabat observes that in Geertz's *Islam Observed* (1971) a woman is never the subject of a verb. This he blames on a 'thou-shalt not judge' attitude – if you can't say something good about women, it is best to say nothing; 'their [womens'] exclusion from these spheres of Muslim life is well-known... Discussing it would be like discussing Navajo seafaring' (Nissim-Sabat 1987:937). I do not endorse either Geertz's supposed evasion nor the call to judgement from his critics, and am far from convinced the 'well-known' exclusion of women in 'Islam' that both Geertz and Nissim-Sabat seem to start from is a useful generalisation across varied times and places.

pushed towards declaring strong opinions, and my attempts at open, evasive remarks which did not carry judgement were often met with derision and frustration. People wanted to push me, in short, because they wanted me to reveal something of myself, perhaps indeed something of how I as a foreigner and a 'Christian' differed and how I was similar. Gender and women was often the crux of such talk. It raised for me the possibility (following Paul Rabinow (1977)) that contra to anthropological orthodoxy, bracketing away may not always be the only or best approach, and that there are times when self-revelation may be necessary for social intimacy. Equally, in other settings learning not to be too open, too forthright, or even too agreeable may be essential (as it certainly was for me) in demonstrating one's social personhood, trustworthiness and indeed masculinity. I thus neither pretend objectivity nor offer a fully worked critique of lived gendered practices or everyday experiences of gender. Rather, I focus on the intersection of gender and other forms of hierarchy, especially at the level of state discourse.

1.4 Outline

The rest of this introduction seeks to set out the historical context of these themes, as well as the ways in which these histories are disputed in, and constitutive of, contemporary politics.

Chapter 2 continues the theme of exploring different, and often competing, historical narratives, as I set out the discourses and social theories surrounding tribe and Bedouin in contemporary Jordan. I seek to re-appraise the legacy of segmentary theory, suggesting that while much of this older perspective is problematic and was never an adequate way of explaining social practices, ideas of protection and the entanglement of reputations and named categories remain as significant social facts, whose continuity requires explanation. I go on to consider the infrastructures that give a sense of reality and permanence to the categories once interpreted as segmentary, looking at the way they are represented in the legal-bureaucratic realm, the electoral system, and through the existence of a putatively tribal mode of dispute resolution and law.

Chapter 3 considers the historical emergence of the current political economy of the Bedouin villages, through the lens of land and land ownership, tracing attempts to reform society through reforming land, and the ways such moves are contested and adapted in practice. Through this topic, I examine the effects of histories of encompassment within the nation-state of Jordan, tracing land through successive legal

systems and through changing practices, showing the role it plays in wider developments, including the rise of both '*ashā'ir*' as socio-political identity categories and also of protest movements. I suggest approaching this material through the conceptual framework of moral economy, relating various conceptions around land to current critiques of the state.

Chapter 4 links together the previous two historically focused chapters, exploring ethnographically the contemporary practices and dilemmas surrounding hospitality, dispute resolution and political spaces in the Bedouin villages. Linking Chapter 2's focus on defining and locating tribes and Bedouin in contemporary Jordan through practices of hospitality, honour and everyday politics together with Chapter 3's with land, place and villagisation, I explore the *dīwān* as a social space and putative centre for tribal categories, in which guests are entertained, deals are struck, favours are asked, disputes resolved and knowledge of genealogy, '*awa'id*' (custom) and narratives of the past are demonstrated and instilled. I examine the recent trend in some areas to build communal *dawāwīn* (pl.) and other alternative spaces for sociality in Madaba and the surrounding villages and how the politics of the *dīwān* flows into wider national politics. I consider how changing uses and imaginings of the *dīwān* intersect with questions of gender, public/private and civil society.

Chapter 5 considers the question of social and economic change and its effects upon idealised and valourised social forms and practices around ideas of tribe, Bedouin and the social reproduction of these categories (including those of the *dīwān*). In it I attend to the subjectivities of my mostly young, male and unemployed or precariously employed interlocutors in the Bedouin villages of Madaba Governorate. I explore their dispositions and values surrounding consumption, accumulation and socio-economic change, focusing on the central metaphor of eating and subsistence in economic talk. I engage with broader anthropological interests around anticipation including imagined futures, hope, boredom, and stuckness/waithood, which have all been deployed as analytics by scholars working on youth and protest in the contemporary Arab world. I suggest a reorientation to go beyond experiential accounts of notions of temporality, reincorporating political economy by focusing on various 'images of the good', an older and widely critiqued anthropological concept, which I contend might provide useful new analytical approaches to youth protest, and link these to social forms with longer histories.

In Chapter 6 I continue developing my argument regarding the experience of youth and economic subjectivities as I trace the origins of and the discourses surrounding a broad swathe of inter-related protests and demonstrations that have occurred in Jordan in recent years since the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ and which have surprised some scholars and commentators by emerging from rural areas and from the supposedly loyalist Bedouin East-Bankers. I analyse the two seemingly dissimilar modalities of the ‘tribal clash’ and the political demonstration, and the various discourses that seek to keep them separate or to conflate them, showing their tendency to collapse into each other. I follow my interlocutors’ opinions on such events and movements, alongside a more detailed ethnographic engagement with the Dhiban Hirak movement, one of the longest-running and most radical rural protest movements in Jordan, within which some of the young interlocutors described in the preceding chapter have taken a large role. I show how tribal categories are both contested but also reproduced in new forms through current moments of political unrest and protest. I also return to the earlier focus on land, to show how the political economic underpinnings to the current position of tribes are used to articulate grievances and imagined alternative moral economies.

Finally, to conclude, I consider the tension between continuity and change running through an examination of these categories and concepts of tribe and Bedouin, which while clearly historically contingent in meaning and content, draw their potency from imagined deep continuities. I return to the question of why and how the Bedouin villages of Madaba and their inhabitants continue to be reproduced as ‘Bedouin’. I focus here on two increasingly discordant elements. On the one hand the political modality of representative sovereignty, and on the other, the use, in fields of mass mediation, of socio-political self-identifiers. I consider the trajectories of these two forces, showing how even as their divergence changes their meaning, the categories themselves show every sign of once again outlasting the events that (re)produced them.

1.5 History

The significance of being tribal or Bedouin in contemporary Jordan is not merely a stable continuity from the deep past, but a contingent and emergent result of historical processes. I intend to place my ethnographic observations around the meaning of tribes in my field site in contemporary Jordan into a deeper historical context, utilising a fairly well-established and widely accepted version of a historical narrative. By doing so I

draw attention to the historically contingent nature of tribes, but also the significant ways that they draw their potency from certain ideas of historical continuity. In the last century, from late Ottoman imperialism, via British colonial rule, through independence, and to recent economic and demographic transformations, the idea of tribes, in general and as particular named categories, have meant many different things. They have changed from something like a polity based on protecting economic interests and managing disputes in a zone beyond strong government power, with descent providing a normative but semi-permeable boundary, to a form of power, representation and type of sovereignty existing on an increasingly encompassed and governed frontier. In more recent decades, tribes have become implicated in attempts to forge a national identity, as well as becoming the field for broad but sub-national and exclusive claims to commonality, collective action and distinction, and even shared political and economic interests pursued, at times, collectively.

Yet the importance of names, persisting over centuries even as the size, reputation, and purpose of the referent has changed, is a source of considerable continuity. This continuity of names, while hiding a significant degree of historical variation, is non-trivial. Even the act of distinguishing names has a conceptual significance, in suggesting differentiation from other people. A name is a vehicle for reputations and dispositions, and these can long outlast events and historical circumstances. Reputation, and in particular ideas of shared, entangled honour, which link different individuals and families to various degrees, creates a particular understanding of the political, and a way of articulating autonomy and separateness in the face of other forms of power, including that of national government. The idea of tribes as names, associated places, capable of generating their own (often encompassed) form of sovereignty, has persisted to various degrees throughout the historical processes mentioned above. Different elements of the idea come to the fore at different times. Sometimes, the idea of economic cooperation to manage and protect resources, as in times of maximal autonomy and nomadic pastoralism but perhaps also in some of the protests over land rights described below, has been paramount. Sometimes, (and, I have suggested, more than is often realised) cohesion has instead been based around the sovereignty of shaykhs and the *kubār*, senior men from senior lineages who make a claim to represent and mediate between their 'people' and distant government, and distant government and 'their' people, and who use such an intermediary position to become wealthy and powerful across boundaries. At other times, more localised but related

forms of patron-client relationship seem to have been the main practice carried out through the category of tribe. Still at other times, (perhaps, as discussed via the encounters in Chapter 6, at present), the tribe is a way of forming broad solidarities and for articulating political and economic protest, connected to an imagined past of communal ownership and social protection. Within this, the idea of differentiation of names and spaces from the wider social (and now national) background persists.

I now set out a brief and necessarily partial sketch of this history. I do so not merely to provide a coherent potted narrative (although some historical scene-setting is necessary for the argument to follow), but to show the significance of the difficulties in doing so; the ways in which history (or rather histories) ‘constitute the political in Jordan’, as Andrew Shryock put it (personal correspondence 2017).

Deep History

The southern Syrian Desert and the pastoralists who have made use of its seasonal grazing have been on the margins but connected to systems of urban power and empire since the emergence of the first city states in Mesopotamia. This long history, often referred to in earlier histories as ‘symbiotic’ or ‘enclosed’ nomadic pastoralism (Rowton 1974), given new impetus with the domestication and increasing use of the Dromedary from, forms a deep grammar to my field site. Early anthropological approaches to these settings (mostly functionalist) tended to take a first-principles bottom-up approach to explaining nomadic ‘segmentary’ societies, as though what Meeker (1978:11) calls ‘the little bands of herders’ found themselves alone in the desert, and worked out a society from there, coming into contact with wider forces in time. In fact, it seems the shadow of rulers in urban states has fallen onto the steppe and desert lands around them from the beginning. Recent reconsiderations of this deep history of state/nomad interaction (for instance Scott 2017) have put forward an interpretation stressing the importance of desires to avoid state power, and especially taxation, while also being able to benefit from urban markets, in encouraging nomadic pastoralism, which while at times disputed, presents an interesting resonance to later conceptions of Middle Eastern nomads and highlanders as ‘marginal’ (e.g. Gellner 1983) – i.e. able to treat with urban-based polities at a distance yet without becoming fully subservient to them, a concept we will return to in the next chapter.

This position has some linguistic support. The term ‘*Arab*’ (and its cognate, as discussed in Section 1.3, the classical term for nomadic Arabic-speakers ‘*A’rāb*’) has an

abundance of potential etymologies in ancient Semitic languages,²⁴ but the first known historical usage is in Assyrian inscriptions and later Aramaic sources, where it is used as an exonym to describe various pastoralist peoples on the edge of empires (Lipinski 2001, Webb 2016). It is applied to people who moved around, traded and sometimes raided urban centres; peoples who, while sharing some linguistic and perhaps cultural similarities with other peoples (in the Semitic language category), were largely represented in historical sources throughout antiquity as a form of ‘internal outsider’ (Webb 2016:233). That these ‘internal outsiders’ were often capable of straddling social worlds, and of being at times very much insiders, is suggested by the involvement of Arabic mercenaries, client rulers, soldiers and merchants throughout the Roman/Sassanian frontier zone, rising to particular military significance during the long Byzantine-Sassanian wars, and often settling in large urban communities, new or pre-existing, though still retaining links to nomadic pastoralists (Hourani 1981, Webb 2016). Webb (*ibid.*) argues that this exonym ‘*arab*’ only became a general self-descriptive category of identity and language with the burst of conquest in the years following Islam, and the concurrent linguistic standardisation involved in moving to a scriptural creed. From this time, as discussed in the next chapter, many historians and scholars see the ‘tribe’ – the *qabīlah* and ‘*ashīrah*’ – in its present form as emerging and taking on new significance as these internal outsiders became participants in empire and conquest, and rapidly, as we have seen, as atavistic but valourised cultural exemplars in certain (largely linguistic and poetic) contexts (Dresch 1991, Crone 1993).

Following the period of Arab military conquest across the former Sassanian and Eastern Roman empires, a complex process of partial conversion and mutual cultural penetration took place in the area of Greater Syria, which came to be ruled by an Arabic-speaking elite who, certainly by the eighth century AD, were practicing a recognisable form of Islam.²⁵ The area immediately east of Madaba was of particular significance at this time, as it lay at the interface between the wealthy Umayyad province of Syria and the Arabian Desert, whose nomadic residents were an essential component of the new empire’s military (Crone 1993). Rulers built fortresses and palaces along this interface which seem to have focussed on entertaining and hospitality

²⁴ Many of these potential etymologies ideas of mobility, desert, and raiding, others of which focus on the route meaning of ‘clear speech’ – i.e. Arabic as a language understood and perhaps used in trade among various interrelated Semitic-speaking populations living in and around the Arabian Desert (Lapidus 2014, Lipinski 2001).

²⁵ Not until the thirteenth century AD did Muslims likely constitute a majority in Syria (Carlson 2015).

and which seem to have had a role in managing relations with the nomadic pastoralists (Grabar 1993, Kennedy 2001). But the region also remained home to many competing notions of political belonging and ethnic categorisation, which often retained distinctions in the face of various attempted encompassments in dynastic empires, united primarily by Islam as the *dar al-Islam* (the house of submission) and the Arabic language as the medium of religious scholarship. From the tenth century AD political power was largely wielded by military dynasties speaking Turkic dialects and increasingly by a court life that drew upon Iranian traditions of sovereignty (Kennedy 2001).

In 1517, the last and perhaps most enduring of these Turkic dynasties, the house of Osman, entered into *Bilad ash-Shām*. The armies of Sultan Selim I conquered Syria and Egypt, rapidly defeating the Mamluk sultanate (another polity ruled by a Central Asian military elite) and occupying Cairo and Damascus, the traditional centres of the Islamic world (Hourani 1981, Rogan 2012), as well as the area's historical marches – including the East Bank of the Jordan River, inheriting a series of relationships with important Bedouin shaykhs. Most of this area would remain in some sense under the rule of the house of Osman until the First World War, although at various times this suzerainty was largely theoretical. The speed of this conquest created a quite different dynamic to the slow war of attrition against the Byzantines and did not create the same Turkic-dominated society of frontier warriors (Kennedy 2001, Goodwin 2011). These were largely lands of *dar al-Islam*, not the *dar al-harb* 'the house of war' exemplified since the first century of Islam by the Byzantine territories in Anatolia and the Balkans. In the cities of this vast new territory small numbers drawn from the *Askari* (military) class of Ottoman Governors and military elites settled to rule, drawn from the Turkic elite *Sipahi* (quasi-feudal cavalry) and from slave-soldiers from the Caucasus and the Balkans. These existed alongside, and sought legitimacy from, another potential elite; the Arabic-speaking *Ulama*, religious scholars who were appointed to official posts as judges and educators, and who in turn relied on the *Askari* for official patronage and promotion to positions in religious trusts (*awqaf*). As Deringil (1998) and Meeker (2002) make clear, the classical sixteenth century Ottoman system saw even village-level military officials regularly moved between postings, preventing local dynasties establishing themselves, but by the eighteenth century many positions in the provinces had none-the-less become hereditary and officials sent from the centre were increasingly dependent on local elites.

Ottoman decline/Ottoman modernity

Recent scholarship tends to question the former orthodoxy of ‘Ottoman decline’ (for instance Grant 1999). It is clear that weaknesses on the eve of colonial occupation have often been extrapolated backwards, while the degree to which late nineteenth century *Tanzimāt* (literally, ‘re-ordering’) reforms affected life in outlying areas such as Palestine has been underemphasised (McElrone 2018). Nevertheless, even archaeologists and historians generally sceptical of the narrative of Ottoman ‘decline’ interpret the evidence as suggesting a general decrease in population, cultivation and permanent settlement in the interior of Greater Syria (Johns 1994, Rogan 2002). As Lewis (1987) and Palmer (2002) suggest, it seems clear that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the periphery of *Bilad ash-Shām* saw the movement of *Badu* aggregations, including the ‘Anazah (especially the Rwala), Shammar, Bani Sakhr and many others from Hejaz and Najd in the Arabian Peninsula, northwards into the settled zone. During this time, Lewis (1987) contends, pastoralism increased, and cultivation decreased, leading to a redrawing of the interface between ‘desert and sown’. This seems to have been a response to increasing decentralisation in the empire, with the rise of hereditary military elites and a general de-garrisoning of Syria (Meeker 1979).

Evidence of Ottoman concern with the lands in the area now Jordan before the nineteenth century is sparse, however the archaeological record suggests a significant degree of urbanism and settled agriculture in the pre-Ottoman period (Johns 1994),²⁶ which declined during the seventeenth century. Some effort was made to maintain irregular tax-gathering incursions into the settled areas of Ajloun, Balga and Karak (Rogan 2002), but to the south and east in *Bādiyat ash-Shām* (the Syrian Desert) even the pretence of Ottoman authority dwindled. In the interface between settled imperial domains and uncontrolled *Bādīyah* a frontier society of sorts existed. Much of Syria was dominated by local strongmen representing different (often sectarian) communities and relying upon ‘tactics of sovereignty based on disciplines of interpersonal association’, as Meeker (2002:14) suggests was common to this period in many provincial societies across the empire. For much of the seventeenth century local military leaders were able

²⁶ Medieval sites in Jordan, including three Crusader castles of the lordship of *Oultrejordain* centred on Karak and the Ayyubid fortress at Ajloun, led to renewed urban life in the eleventh century. The disruption from the Crusader occupation on the coast made the inland route to Damascus of central importance and thus the emirates of Ajloun and Shobak became vital Mamluk possessions (Sinibaldi 2013). The Ghor (the year-round warm lowlands in the depression of the Jordan Valley) was also an important region in Mamluk sugar production, although this was already in decline by the fifteenth century (Walker 2004).

to expand across the Levant while cloaking themselves in the legitimacy of Ottoman titles, often presenting themselves as governors. In the northern part of the area now Jordan the power of the Ma'anid Druze dynasts of Mount Lebanon was paramount, via local alliances with powerful shaykhs.

Raids, open warfare and even the capture of towns and fortresses by Bedouin shaykhs in this period are still a source of heroic oral historical narratives found in the Balga (Shryock 1997); the 'age of shaykhs', which were it not for the clear evidence of its historical contingency might well seem a changeless world of segmentary systems. As the reputations of shaykhs rose and fell, other men sought alliances with them, entered their service or accepted their paramouncy, while a failing shaykh might be supplanted or abandoned by followers. Far from a deterministic structural feature of this history, shaykhly leadership was fluid and thus generative of change within the broader structures of name/space categories. Many of the current examples of these categories in Jordan relate their current positions and reputations to this period.

This period saw the 'Adwan rise to become paramount shaykhs in the Balga, demanding *khuwa* (tributary protection money euphemistically termed 'brotherhood'²⁷) from the remaining settled communities around as-Salt, only to be drawn into conflict with the Bani Sakhr and Rwala arriving from the steppe to the south and east (Shryock 1997). Many inhabitants of the *Bādīyah* were reliant on selling camels and livestock at markets in Damascus, Nablus and Jerusalem, and on payments for servicing and escorting the Hajj caravan on its annual journey to Mecca (Petersen 2008). This, as well as the suppression of raiding into settled areas, were the main Ottoman concerns in the area.²⁸ The French traveller Volney (1987 [1805]) reports frequent village abandonment during his 1785 trip, and that of 3,200 supposed taxable villages in Syria, only 400

²⁷ The *khuwa* ranged from practices little distinguished from theft and extortion to more genuinely symbiotic arrangements of alliance, resource exchange and protection, and often consisted of a payment of cereal grains to nomads from cultivators. It sometimes conferred the status of ally or associate (hence 'brotherhood') on the payer, and in return conferred a relationship of suzerainty, but at other times settled communities (as at Karak) paid it to several different groups. The payment was generally made to a shaykh who would then distribute it to his followers (Abu Jaber 1989, Rogan 2002).

²⁸ The limits in this relationship are made clear by the still-infamous events of 1756, when the Bani Sakhr raided the Hajj caravan after the Ottoman Governor of Damascus failed to pay their usual retainer fee to supply, escort and permit its passage through their territory. Frederick Peake (1958) recorded that a popular account had it that in response the Wali in Damascus invited leading Sukhur shaykhs for a feast and executed them. The next year, when the Hajj was returning from Mecca expecting the Sukhur to be cowed, a mass of warriors led by Qa'dan al-Fayiz raided the caravan, killing and enslaving thousands. After this dramatic incident, which led to the execution of the Wali of Damascus and the resignation of the Amir al-Hajj, the Bani Sakhr seem to have been left largely untouched (Joudah 1987).

could still be found and taxed. The Balga, once a settled region, was increasingly seen as ‘Bedouin’ land, part of various *dira* (territories claimed and held by a name/space group), and remaining cultivators were forced to pay *khuwa*. *fallahīyn* (cultivators) often ended up facing demands for *khuwa* as well as from local Ottoman tax farmers.

From the mid-nineteenth century, a slow process of imperial penetration took place, as first the semi-independent rulers of Egypt and then the Ottoman Governor in Damascus, Rashid Pasha, occupied forts and suppressed rebel shaykhs east of the Jordan. Rashid Pasha was tasked with bringing the *Tanzimāt* (literally, ‘re-ordering’) reforms to the Syrian provinces (*Bilad ash-Shām*), parts of which had been near-autonomous for centuries (Deringil 1998). This led to what Tariq Tell (2013) characterises as an uneven transformation of the loosely-encompassed frontiers of south-eastern Ottoman Syria into productive parts of the Syrian grain-export-based economy. As part of *Tanzimāt*, the Ottoman 1858 land code encouraged registration, which in turn required land to be cultivated. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, slowly, and at first indirectly, the Bani Sakhr and their neighbours were drawn into agricultural village life. Outside of as-Salt and Karak (the only urban settlements on the East Bank prior to the nineteenth century) new towns were founded, often peopled from elsewhere.²⁹ This was, according to Fischbach’s (2006) interpretation, in part a warning and an inducement to the powerful *Badu* shaykhs to register their land or else risk it being registered to someone else.

These efforts at imperial penetration into the frontiers and at centralisation reached new levels under the ‘Young Turks’ in 1908, with a re-imposition of the *Tanzimāt*-era constitution on the reactionary sultan Abdul Hamid II and the first efforts to ‘Turkify’ the Syrian provinces (Kayali 1997). Usama Makdisi (2002) has argued that while Said’s (1978) *Orientalism* largely follows an East-West binary, to the new Ottoman elite in Istanbul the inhabitants of Syria, Baghdad and even more so the Hijaz formed their own relational ‘Orient’ as stagnated and reluctant subjects of a course of Turk-led imperial modernisation. As Makdisi puts it (2002:769-770) the Ottomans ‘responded to Western Orientalism by embracing the latter’s underlying logic of time and progress’ in order to be ‘equal to and temporally coeval with the West but culturally distinct and politically independent from it’, while the provinces now defined primarily as ‘Arab’ became ‘temporally segregated and ultimately racially differentiated’, part of

²⁹ The Ottoman-Russian wars displaced large numbers of Circassian and Chechen Muslims who were resettled throughout greater Syria after long and difficult journeys (Chatty 2010a) and in Jordan established the villages of Amman (which became the capital) and Wadi as-Sir.

a ‘gradation of Orients’.³⁰ While the Ottoman period cannot comfortably be included firmly within the category of the colonial, it sits firmly within most understandings of imperial, and so while worth distinguishing from overt European colonial penetrations, it together with these comprises an extended imperial interest in the area now Jordan.

Calls to reform and attempts to create popular committees to encourage modernisation were also heard in the Arabic-speaking areas, where growing educated professional classes began to form their own underground societies, such as al-Fatah in Syria and al-Ahd in Mesopotamia. The most important intrusion of the state in this time was perhaps the construction of railways and telegraph routes, especially the Hijaz Railway from Damascus to Medina, which from 1909 onwards largely replaced the Hajj caravan as the means of pilgrimage for the empire, devastating the economy of the Bani Sakhr shaykhs who had relied on the Hajj subsidy and money from camel sales. The route to Hijaz and the holy cities, where the Hashemite Sharifs presided as custodians and theocratic Ottoman vassals, ran a series of telegram posts, fortresses and stations, from which to project power over the surrounding territory of the *Bādīya* (Winterburn 2012).

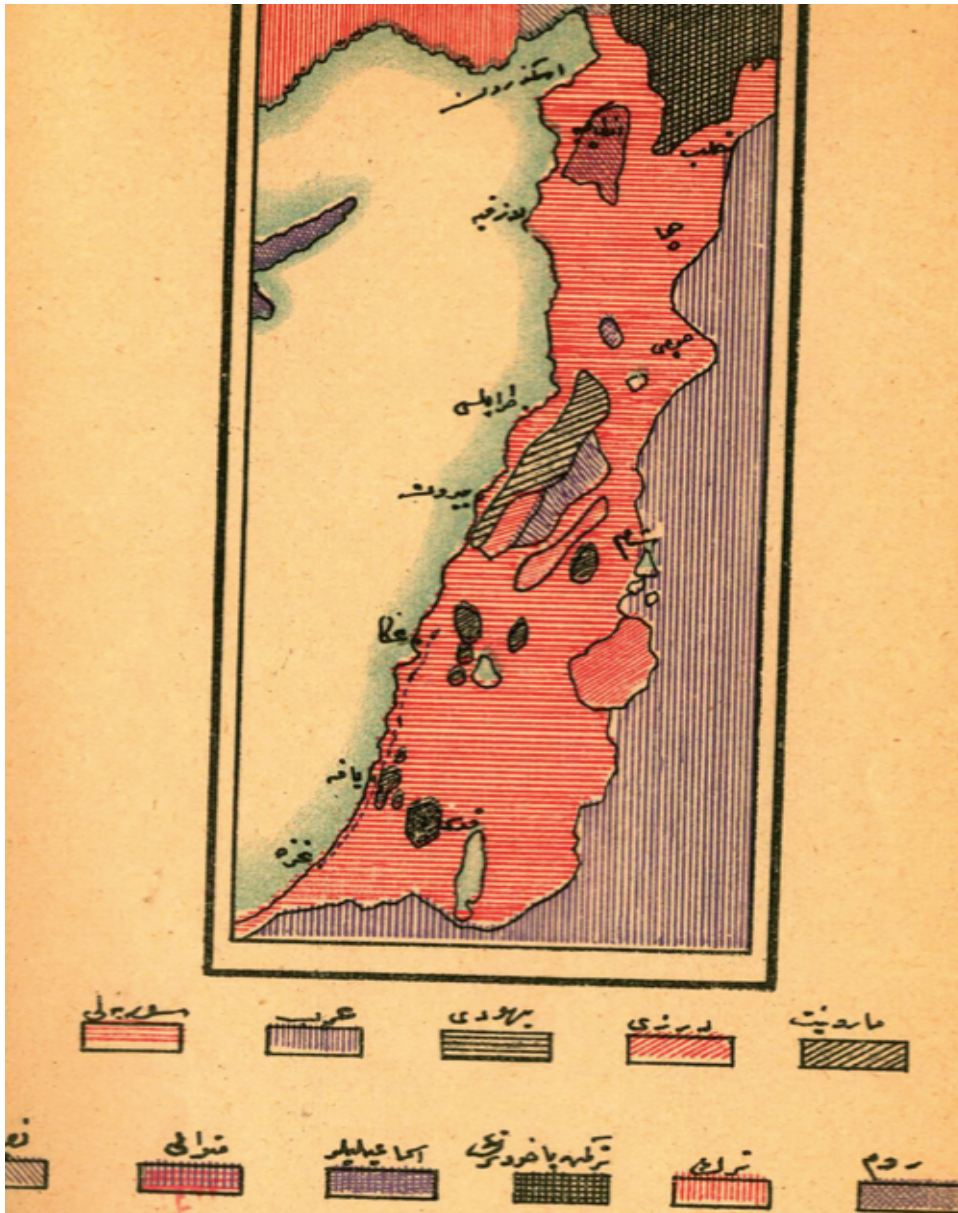
It was during this period of reform that the use of sectarian and ethnic categories shifted from ad-hoc and relational labels to systematic tools of imperial power in Ottoman lands, although the use of these labels still differed markedly from today’s. This is seen most clearly in the emerging genre of ethnographic maps, including the map from the 1915 Ottoman manual for imperial officers in Palestine, *Filastin Risalesi*, analysed in detail by Tamari (2011). This included a map block-shaded by *millet* ‘people’ (Figure 1.8), listing the majority of the settled areas of Levant, including those parts of Jordan where agriculture was practiced routinely, as *Suriyeli* – ‘Syrian’. Most of the modern population in Jordan lives in areas shaded on this map then as *Suriyeli*. The legend ‘*arab* (the inland purple block on the map) is used only in its original sense, as a designator for desert-dwelling nomadic pastoralists.³¹ The *Filastin Risalesi*, Tamari argues, shows a desire to limit Arabs to areas off the edge of the map. It also shows a growing sense of the existence of a people not ‘Turks’ but also not identified yet with

³⁰ Similar discourses in Turkish nationalism regarding Syria operate in the post-Ottoman period too, as Navaro-Yashin (2002) points out and was a crucial part of post-Ottoman attempts at creating modernist Kemalist ‘Turkey’ – a land of modern Turks defined in opposition to unmodern ‘Arabs’.

³¹ In the written descriptions of the *Filastin Risalesi*, the boundary is not as clear-cut as on the map, but based on gradations of nomadism and socio-cultural distance from the Ottoman elite.

the nomadic Arabs further inland, and that linguistic-based Arab nationalism was not recognised by the map-making official.

Figure 1.8: Ottoman ‘ethnographic’ map from *Filastin Risalesi*, from Danforth (2013:n.p). The Purple inland bloc is labelled ‘Arab’, while the coastal areas in red are defined as *Suriyeli*.



Increasing attempts at military and economic domination of the Hijaz and the Arabic-speaking parts of the empire more broadly, forms the backdrop for Jordan’s founding myth, *ath-thuwrah al-arabīah*, the Arab Revolt; an event from which the royal house draws its legitimacy to this day via holding anniversaries, commemorative currency, and the names of streets and squares. The Hashemite Sharif of Mecca, Hussein, started the rebellion in Hijaz, encouraged by British money and promises of post-war

statehood.³² His son Faisal expanded it northwards into the area now Jordan, and although prior to the war he had been closely involved with urban-based Arab nationalist secret society *Fatāt*, he primarily relied throughout the campaign on Bedouin fighters. In the area where I conducted fieldwork, support was mixed, a topic still given significance in narratives today. As many of my Hamaydah interlocutors told me, most of their shaykhs had declared for Faisal by 1917, while most cultivators and the Christians of Madaba were hostile to the revolt. The Sukhur shaykhs were divided and equivocating, with al-Fayiz still supporting and taking payments from the Ottomans (a fact their enemies frequently recall in historical talk) although others, including the famous shaykh Haditha al-Kraishah supported the revolt.

With the Ottoman military collapse of 1918 the Hashemites attempted to establish a united Arab Kingdom of Syria (which claimed the areas of modern Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and parts of Southern Turkey) with Damascus as its capital. However, in the face of colonial interests and the confused tangle of treaties and promises emerging from the Paris peace conference, it failed to achieve wide international recognition, allowing the French to swiftly invade, defeat Faisal and his allies at the Battle of Maysaloun, and occupy Syria without international protest (Barr 2011). In the fallout, Britain and France were awarded League of Nation Mandates over southern and northern parts of *Bilad ash-Shām* respectively, but the discourse of Arab unity thwarted by colonial interest would prove long-lived, further fed by British support for Zionist settlement. Britain proceeded to occupy Palestine and took on nominal responsibility for the lands of the East Bank, called in the Paris Conference ‘Trans-Jordan’. The Mandate, in Arabic the *Intidhāb*, had come to Jordan, and with it, my interlocutors told me the coming of *ad-duwala* (the state). In popular imagination in Jordan today, this is the beginning of the modern nation-state and of the beginning of a watershed in the relationship of Bedouin and the government of settled zones. Such a position of rupture, as we have seen, is not a straightforward historical fact, and in fact many features of late-Ottoman imperialism were moving in a similar direction already. The *zamman ash-shuyyukh*, the age of shaykhs, had come to a close, and with it, in retrospect, a type of historical narrative of lineages, genealogies and heroic acts defining

³² Hussein had been vaguely promised Britain would acknowledge Arab Independence and an Arab Khaliphate under Hussein, in areas where Britain had made no other commitments in the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. This correspondence was thus in some doubt once the Central Powers revealed through captured documents the existence of the Sykes-Picot agreement and when the Balfour Declaration became public in November 1917.

political relationships. The ‘age of shaykhs’ as a concept belongs not, as we have seen, to a stateless world of nomadic tribes, but rather to an age of rising imperialism, when some shaykhly lineage co-opted and adapted to, as well as sometimes contested, the role of state apparati and practices, in order to further their own projects of rulership. Yet the Mandate, with its combination of a non-Islamic foreign power with valourised local clients, is conceptually the point of rupture in modern historical imaginaries of Jordan, and with some reason. Shryock (1997:92) writes of the Balga Bedouin historians’ reluctance to tell stories after this point, because with the coming of the *zaman al-hukūma*, the Age of Government, ‘they no longer produced the type of history worth recording. Their political universe was altered beyond its capacity to generate heroic events’. This may be so, but the shaykhly lineages themselves, and their political influence, outlived this type of history, as did the discursive power of ideas of being Bedouin and of belonging to ‘*ashā’ir*’.

Colonial effects and nation-building

In the post-First World War Settlements, various documents, reports, fact-finding missions and conferences attempted to categorise and reorder the Middle East, from the proto-ethnographic American King-Crane Commission with its emphasis on ill-defined self-determination to the Mosul plebiscite, all seeking in different ways to decide upon and stabilise post-Ottoman ethnic boundaries (Rogan 2002, Barr 2011). In this ferment, few expected Trans-Jordan to survive long as a political unit. It seemed provisional and artificial; a small periphery carved off from the areas that might support its progress to modern statehood. In 1920 it was still unclear what the legal status of the lands east of the Jordan River was. Three complicated and deliberately ambiguous wartime agreements were publicly known (Barr 2011); the Hussein-MacMahon correspondence (which had promised Sharif Hussein British support for Arab independence after the war), the Balfour Declaration (which gave a vague commitment that the British Government would look ‘favourably’ upon the establishment of a Jewish homeland ‘in’, Palestine) and the Sykes-Picot Agreement (which agreed British and French spheres of influence, as well as a later-voided sphere of influence for Russia). The final post-San Rem fudge was more or less colonial rule, but under League of Nation Mandates, with a suggestion of tutelage and future statehood.

Britain occupied Palestine but to the east of the Jordan River the expense of occupation did not seem worth the cost. At first, an attempt was made to cheaply administer each of the four former Ottoman *Mutasharaf* (sub-provinces) east of the

Jordan Valley (Ajloun, Balga, Karak and Ma'an) via its own local governing committees of notables, but these had largely collapsed by 1921 (Alon 2009). It was at this point that Faisal's older brother, Abdullah bin Hussein, made an attempt to restore Hashemite power in Syria, travelling north towards Damascus with a small armed retinue. Stopping at Ma'an to meet with local allies, he was approached by a British envoy, who keen to prevent an embarrassing incident with France, appeased him with an alternative: a position as Amir of these Trans-Jordanian territories. Abdullah accepted, although it seems likely he still harboured ambitions to gain larger territories in Syria, though initially many in the British authorities saw his position as a temporary accommodation, it proved a sufficiently successful compromise to be allowed to continue (Jevon 2017).

Abdullah appointed a government of educated Syrians and Palestinians who had administrative experience under the Ottomans, under the enforced supervision of a handful of British advisors (Alon 2009). Meanwhile, Abdullah ruled primarily as the Sharifs had in Hijaz, by mediating between the British and the local notables and shaykhs, touring the latter's guestrooms and tents to form alliances, doing them small favours around land and bureaucracy and in return calling on their political and military support. The British complained that Abdullah spent disproportionate time on 'tribal affairs' (Alon 2009:76). Although now officially a separate government to Palestine west of the Jordan, British power in both officially rested on the same Mandate, both were headed in theory by a single British High Commissioner, shared a single currency and had no border controls between them (Wilson 1987). Abdullah's government gained a promise from the British in 1923 to keep Trans-Jordan separate, and to exclude it from the realm of Zionist settlement, although such a promise remained provisional in British eyes as late as 1937 (*ibid.*). The British were also keen to keep a secure land corridor to Iraq and a buffer between Syria and the expansionary Saudi state. The early years of the Mandate of Trans-Jordan witnessed a devastating earthquake in 1927 followed by droughts in 1929-1930, the distant shockwaves of the Great Depression, and finally violent raids from the Najdi *Ikhwan* (Wahabi paramilitary raiders, largely recruited from among Bedouin, but ignoring their normal practices of raiding and warfare, and originally operating under the banner if not the orders of Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud). This series of calamities led to economic collapse in towns, the loss of over half the animals in most herds, and ensured that the British hopes for a self-sustaining administration were unrealised (Tell 2013).

The Mandate's largest intervention in Jordan, which I discuss in Chapter 3, was land reform. One of the first British establishments in the capital was the Department of Land and Survey (DLS) in 1924. The British administration, with little involvement from Abdullah or his government, imported their own colonial techniques in order to first survey and then settle the land they judged to be worth cultivating in ways which ended the multiple, overlapping, communal and usufructuary nature of land tenure pre-Mandate (Fischbach 2000). Such a policy was one of many intended to loosen 'the hold of the tribal sheikhs on their tribesmen' as the Department's first director, G.F Walpole (quoted in Layne 1994:42) put it.

Another key institution of the Mandate was the Arab Legion, originally a locally-recruited and British-officered police force of 200 men, but an increasingly large and important military force in the region (Alon 2009). Under the command of British officer Frederick Peake, the legion was used to intervene and suppress conflicts between various powerful *'ashā'ir*, as well as increasingly to compel taxation and obedience to government rule. The legion was initially undermanned and throughout the 1920s was often unsuccessful in its attempts to maintain order and 'police the tribes', as Peake (1958) described its intended role. The British and local allies faced down a number of rebellions from powerful Bedouin shaykhs, including a serious uprising in the Balga led by Sultan Majid al-'Adwan in 1923 – itself partly the result of perceived marginalisation of the 'Adwan in favour of the Bani Sakhr and Mithqal al-Fayiz by Amir Abdullah and the British (al-'Assāf 2015). Peake used force to defeat the Adwan rebellion, which marked the last conventional major military confrontation between the state and a tribal Bedouin army in the country, and which saw the Balga people settled and partially disarmed, accelerating the general trend whereby the Balga Bedouin under pressure from incoming nomadic Bedouin (like the Sukhur) were becoming settled cultivators more subject to state power. Yet the leading rebels, including Majid, were pardoned and to some degree conciliated and reincorporated into the new state's governing elite. The standard policy largely attempted to deflect confrontation with the most powerful and militant *'ashā'ir*, and those on whom the security of the territory rested. In one famous incident still well known to my interlocutors, Frederick Peake visited the Bani Sakhr shaykh Mithqal al-Fayiz at his home in Um al-'Amad unarmed in order to negotiate a truce, only for Mithqal to arrest him and hold him for several days, released only after agreeing to compromise. This and many other stories suggest that British colonial rule in Jordan, although at times harsh and coercive, and always backed

by a threat of force, was on quite different terms to in other regions, especially in the area of focus for this dissertation, always under the protection of powerful shaykhs.

In time however, the Arab Legion became more effective both militarily and culturally. Within this body, of particular importance was the Desert Patrol under the command of British officer John Baggot Glubb, called in Jordan with the Ottoman honorific Glubb *Basha*. Glubb largely recruited from Bedouin, particularly the sons of shaykhs, who served both as evangelists for, and hostages to, British policy in the *Bādīyah*. Through a string of forts with attendant services and pension-payment offices, Glubb and the Arab Legion executed what Tell (2013:74) terms a policy of ‘military Keynesianism’. When Glubb took over the Arab legion in 1938 and later became commander in chief of a nominally independent Jordan, he continued to Bedouinise the military. Glubb had already largely suppressed large-scale Bedouin raiding by 1932, coinciding with both economic depression and a livestock reduction, forcing many *Badu* to look for employment elsewhere and to take any help the Mandate authorities offered; even if this meant sedenterisation. Army pensions required permanent addresses, as did accessing services like hospitals and education, and so places that had once been mostly camps for labourers who tilled farms for Bedouin masters became the nuclei of ‘Bedouin villages’ – no longer a contradiction in terms as it once might have seemed. As will be discussed below, dispute resolution and even social categories (who was truly *Badu*, who was to be subject to ‘tribal law’) also came to be arbitrated by Glubb and his colleagues, who controlled a frontier zone spanning all the lands not surveyed.

At the start of the British Mandate in 1922, the Tribal Administration Department reported the number of nomadic Bedouin as 102,120, or around 46% of a total Trans-Jordanian population of 225,350 (Massad 2001:56). By 1976 the proportion had apparently fallen to less than 3% (Rowe 2006). This does not mean a complete abandonment of pastoralism; as I will discuss later, it continues to have a symbolic importance, and produced goods for domestic hospitality, but it does show that while Jordan has supposedly remained a ‘tribal’ and ‘Bedouin’ country, nomadic pastoralism has largely been superseded as a mode of subsistence. In these two ways then, British Mandate policies of land survey and desert frontier-zone pacification, although generally light by the standards of other colonial regimes, sought to produce and form a Jordanian national society, and notions of ‘the tribe’ were key zones in which they sought to do so.

Ideas of borders and boundedness were made suddenly important by the Mandate and the new trans-national system of nation-states. The creation of a political border along the Jordan River had no particular precedent nor was it a colonial objective; the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine was ambiguous as to the status of these territories but was generally considered to include both banks (Alon 2009, Patrick 2018). For centuries, and within living memory for some of my interlocutors, the most important links ran not within the main north-south axis of modern Jordan, but east-west across the steep mountain valley of the Ghor and the Jordan River to the extensive farmland and urban markets of the West Bank. Hamaydah grandparents I talked with recollected occasional week-long journeys with donkeys to al-Quds (Jerusalem) to sell livestock and to buy metalwork and other goods not available locally. The urban centre of as-Salt, the largest in Jordan, was largely an outpost for merchants based in Nablus. The peripheral nature of the lands now part of Jordan and its sparse population in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, furthered its dependence on centres elsewhere, rather than its coherence as a region. Recent historical textbooks make connections between Jordanian nationhood and various ancient precedents but none of these seem entirely convincing as exemplary ancestors.³³ Indeed, the idea of a separate history of ‘Trans-Jordan’ would likely have seemed strange to many of the region’s historical rulers; again and again the area was a periphery to *filastīn* – ‘Palestine’ in the west and Syria in the north, and conversely from the perspective of these more settled regions it was to some degree an extension of Arabia to the south. The areas of Ajloun, Balga and Karak were rarely politically unified in a meaningful sense beyond general inclusion at the margins of larger empires. This seemed weak soil for implanting a particularistic local nationalism, and conversely given the Hashemite ruling house and the background to establishment, a potential well-spring for a larger Arab nationalism. Jordan, then, cannot be taken as a satisfactory analytical unit for analysis without considering the contingent nature of its origins and the other scales of connectivity and difference which remain obscured by following the discourse of the nation-state.

³³ These include ancient kingdoms of the Ammonites (from whom the capital Amman takes its name), Moab and Edom, as well as mention of *Jund al-Urdun*, a Provincial unit of the Umayyad Caliphate in the seventh century AD, but this province included lands east and west of the River. Later some of modern Jordan was part of the Crusader lordship of *Oultrejordain*, a violent and disputed frontier zone, but this was mostly made up of Karak and the south.

As we shall see, in particular, its history cannot be separated cleanly from that of the land across the Jordan Valley, the West Bank, both in terms of *longue durée* connectivity and the more recent history of occupation, settler colonialism and mass migration. Jordan's political existence and demographics since independence have been entangled with this conflict. The consciousness of this entanglement with another potential project of nationhood has given new significance in contemporary discourse to the genre of genealogically-structured Bedouin historical thought as building blocks for an alternative nationalism. Palestine remains a 'sore' and a national 'shame' in Nasserist and pan-Arab discourses (Suleiman 2004) but also more immediately for Jordan the 'significant other' (Layne 1994:22) in relation to which Jordan and Jordanian-ness has been constructed

Independence and development

In 1946, the Mandate officially ended, Jordan become independent and Abdullah was promoted from *Amir* to king. In the following decades many in Jordan hoped for a unified anti-colonial Arab state as Nasserist and Ba'athist politics swept the region.³⁴ In 1948, the disastrous *Nakba* (the 'catastrophe') war between the newly-declared state of Israel and the newly-independent Arab countries of the region erupted. As Syria and Egypt were swiftly defeated, Glubb and the well-trained and equipped Arab legion occupied Jerusalem/al-Quds and the West Bank. In the aftermath Jordan's government became responsible not only for the 460,000 existing inhabitants of the area they now occupied, but also those (perhaps the same number again) who had fled areas now occupied by Israel. Following elections for West Bank deputies full union was declared in 1950, granting civil rights to these new subjects (unlike all the other Arab states). However, the refugees in Jordan were given a differentiated status, and were in part the responsibility of the new United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Abdullah throughout this time sought further unions with other Arab nations and did not limit his territorial ambitions to Jordan. Abdullah's actions were treated as opportunism

³⁴ Arab Nationalism, growing out of the general intellectual trend of the *Nahda* in Egypt and Syria, moved leftwards in the 1930s and 1940s. The thinking of Michel Aflaq, a Syrian Christian, who wrote the foundational texts for what would become the Ba'ath ('resurrection') movement inspired a series of political parties across the region. The Ba'ath party was briefly influential in 1950s and 1960s Jordan (Anderson 2005) but although extant is now politically suspect in the eyes of the royal house, and is strictly circumscribed. Nevertheless, many of my interlocutors still sympathised deeply with the cause of socialist Arab unity, and admired Ba'athist figures, including Saddam Hussein.

by other Arab states, and in 1951 rumours began that Jordan and Lebanon were seeking a separate peace treaty with Israel. The king was shot dead on the steps of the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on 20 July 1951 (days after the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister in Amman) likely at the behest of the influential Husseini family in Jerusalem, *Ulama* who were positioning themselves as alternative leaders for Palestine (Jevon 2017). This was a formative event in discourses of East-Banker/West-Banker bifurcation.

During the first decade of ‘independence’ Glubb, by now not only Commander of the Desert Patrol but the entire Arab Legion, retained command of the new national Army, and the colonial-era land system and Bedouin Control Laws remained in place. This only changed when after a disastrous 13-month reign by Abdullah’s apparently mentally-ill son Talal, Abdullah’s British-educated grandson Hussein Bin Talal became King at the age of 16 in 1952, ruler of both East and West Banks. Mindful of his grandfather’s fate, Hussein did not pursue peace with Israel, and allowed *Fedayin* guerrilla fighters to operate out of Jordanian territory. Under pressure from rising support for Nasserism and facing protests at home, Hussein cancelled his treaty with Britain in 1956 and dismissed Glubb from his role as Commander of the Army. He also appointed a socialist and Arab Nationalist-leaning government under Suleiman Nabulsi, with representatives of the Ba’ath party and Communist Party in cabinet; the only time in Jordan’s history when the leader of the party that had won the most seats in an election was invited on this basis to form a government (Anderson 2005). Hussein in this period feared forced union with Egypt under Nasser, especially in the wake of the Suez War. The king thus maintained lukewarm alignment with NATO and the Eisenhower Doctrine, while Nabulsi sought to move Jordan into Nasser’s sphere. Rioting and violence between royalist and Arab nationalist army units broke out, and the king declared martial law. The Arab nationalist officers fled to Syria, Nabulsi’s government was dismissed in favour of a royalist one, and Hussein formed a closer union with Iraq, ruled by his cousin Faisal II, grandson of Amir Faisal from the Arab Revolt, creating a rival block to Nasser’s in what some have called the ‘Arab Cold War’ (ibid.). As a consequence, power in this time drifted from officials or elected politicians and to the royal house, and its old ‘tribal’ allies.

As the only potential ally left among the Arab leaders, the Americans increased financial and military support for Jordan. Thus, early in his reign, Hussein sought to steer a middle course between America and the USSR, and between Arab Nationalists

influenced by socialism (whether Nasserist or Ba'athist) and socially conservative and locally-focused interest groups, which did not wish to see major agrarian or social reforms, especially regarding Islam and personal status. Hussein also conducted back-channel diplomacy with the Israelis while still acquiescing to Palestinian groups launching attacks from Jordanian territory, and engaging Israeli units when they retaliated (Gandolfo 2012).

Hussein was forced from his middle ground by the 1967 war with Israel, during which Jordan lost the West Bank and Jerusalem. Jordan still issued passports to residents there, however, and refused to acknowledge the border-crossing as an international border. Further waves of forced migration in the wake of the war led to an unprecedented surge of urbanisation within Jordan as a population explosion occurred, spurring the development of new suburbs around Amman. The consequences of this for the land tenure system and the social role of land would be far-reaching, as discussed in Chapter 5. In 1970, following a plane hijacking, Hussein ordered loyalist troops to move against the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), along with sympathetic army units. In the civil war that followed, now called 'Black September', Hussein re-asserted his authority and martial law across Jordan, driving out the PLO. The popular Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tal (still remembered fondly by most East-Bankers) was assassinated at the height of the violence, and after this period. Despite making peace with Arafat's reformed PLO, Hussein replaced most senior government and army staff of West-Banker origin with East-Bankers, and relied especially on intelligence officers from key shaykhly lineages to enforce palace rule, and it was from this time that the discourse of bifurcation in origins (between 'original' Jordanians and new arrivals from Palestine) became embedded (Gandolfo 2012). Throughout these decades, policies of sedenterisation and encouraging cultivation over pastoralism continued, the latter becoming 'of negligible importance' to the economy by 1967, according to Mazur (1979, quoted in Layne 1994:44), but under this new bifurcated system existing policies favouring military recruitment among some former pastoralists were increased.

Jordan and its army were a key strategic interest to post-war Britain in maintaining a foothold in the Middle East, and as such Britain was willing to finance the new kingdom (Jevon 2017). Over time, as Cold War alignments made Jordan important in containing the USSR's (perceived) allies in Egypt and Syria, America increasingly took over this role as funder, still contributing aid making up over 2.5% of Jordan's GDP, and encouraging Gulf allies to invest in Jordan (Peters and Moore

2009:259). In 1990, 47% of the workforce worked for the state, also receiving state subsidised goods, and this proportion rose to near 90% in southern and eastern (Bedouin) areas (Baylouny 2008:285). Foreign donors continued to bear this vast cost to keep the peace with Israel and more recently with political Islamism. Despite a lack of oil or other primary resource wealth (apart from modest phosphate and potassium around the Dead Sea), many economists and political scientists have therefore characterised Jordan as a variety of Rentier State, trading peace, security, sovereign bases and military cooperation in return for financial and diplomatic support (Beblawi 1987, Greenwood 2003, Peters and Moore 2009).

Into the Neoliberal: economic reform and development

During the 1980s Jordan faced the need for ready capital, acquiring assistance from its Western allies (via the world Bank and IMF) and the Gulf Cooperation Council, but also from Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The Iraqi connection gave Jordanians subsidised fuel costs, which ended with the Gulf War and a deterioration in relationships with Gulf states, leading to many Jordanian workers there losing their jobs (Yitzhak 2018:28). The economic downturn that followed led Hussein to seek help from the Bretton Woods organisations.

With the end of Cold War, as the expense of Jordan seemed less justifiable, the Bretton Woods institutions increasingly took over from the State Department, and the IMF imposed a series of Structural Adjustment programs on Jordan starting in 1989 (Harrington, El Said and Wang 2006). The reforms Jordan attempted after 1992 were both rapid and far-reaching, including not only removing trade protections but domestic taxation, financial regulation, the privatisation of state-supported industries and a programme of spending reduction which reduced what Baylouny (2008) has called 'militarized welfare' given to rural East-Bankers.

At first Jordan was treated as a model reformer, and IMF/World Bank growth forecasts were excellent, however these proved overly optimistic, and were rapidly replaced by talk of 'reform slippage' in development circles, widespread economic pessimism and tighter conditions applied to further liberalisation loans (Harrington, El Said and Wang 2006). Following Hussein's death from cancer and the succession of his son Abdullah II in 1999, Jordan came under increasing pressure from its financial backers to undertake further economic reforms, as well as pursue peace with Israel, and 'democratisation' (the latter two goals often being in conflict, as the electorate overwhelmingly supported maintaining Arab solidarity with Palestine). These reforms

have been increasingly out of step with the public mood. Reductions in subsidies on bread, fuel and other necessities, and increased taxes on tobacco and imports, have led to public protests of increased frequency and intensity, leading to frequent cabinet reshuffles but little economic change.³⁵ Meanwhile protests are used to attract further foreign funding, to increase ‘security’, and as a bargaining chip with the IMF to delay implementation and repayments (Harrington *et al* 2006).

During these decades of unrests and economic reform, *ja’amāt ‘aīlyah* (‘family associations’) have exploded in number as semi-official registered organisations, with memberships often thousands’ strong. Marie-Anne Baylouny (2006) links this to the retreat of the state following neoliberal market reforms, and which she sees as reinforcing an ideology of genealogically-legitimised association.³⁶ Such groups allow some social welfare and sharing of risk, via common funds, but access is controlled by certain elite figures along supposedly genealogical lines. The family associations, like *‘ashā’ir*, do not operate at a single scale and genealogy does not prevent other strategic concerns creeping into decisions of boundary-drawing. They are especially significant in the poorer suburbs of Amman and in Palestinian-majority areas, where they are often networks through which electoral patronage is carried out, though they are less common and important in my area of study.

Jordan is now to some scholars (such as Ababneh 2016, 2018) an egregious but not atypical example of neoliberalism in the Global South, as various development actors worked with the new king to open Jordan up to the full force of liberal market-led economic development, with a campaign of further subsidy reductions and privatisations, the effects of which were especially keenly felt by the Bedouin, ironically furthering their perceived need for ‘development’ and spawning a host of interventions to bring them into the market and the national economy. The loss of an animal feed subsidy has made pastoralism uneconomic in recent years (Rowe 2006). Meanwhile livestock prices have slumped, and wages in the army and bureaucracy, the mainstay of

³⁵ Of particular social significance, as discussed in Chapter 5, is the rising cost of state subsidised bread (Martinez 2018). *khubz ‘araby* (simple flatbread made with state flour to a set recipe), which rose from 22 to 40 *qursh* per kilogram during my fieldwork (roughly a rise from around 24 pence to 48 pence GBP). Fuel prices, traditionally kept low by the Gulf states to prevent instability in Jordan, have also increased.

³⁶ Though drawing precedent from the communally-maintained guesthouses of various *Hamulah* (lineage) groups, in Jordan they were originally largely formed by migrant communities and new arrivals in the cities who banded together for mutual aid. These have become a category, partially legally recognised, through which state and developmental funding is channelled, featuring a common fund for emergencies and sometimes a type of unemployment insurance, governed by committees reflecting the older and more influential ‘family members’ (Baylouny 2006).

employment for Bedouin, have stagnated (Tell 2015). The private sector has not filled this gap. While private enterprises have become easier to establish, they still rely on patronage networks which often reach up to the royal court. Large court-linked monopoly-holders are seen as the beneficiaries of liberalisation, not the country as a whole. Foreign investment is channelled through a narrow number of approved firms.

The state's answer to these failures has been 'development' – no longer vast state-led projects, but apparently-agile grassroots donor organisations partnering with local projects. The state, since 2003, has transferred much of its responsibilities to former Bedouin communities to the Hashemite Fund for the Development of Jordan *Bādīyah*, which present themselves as choosing the worthiest community projects.³⁷ As such, Jordan, like Ferguson's (1994) description of Lesotho, has become a 'development state', to the point that development as a category of activity and lucrative employment has entered local parlance. Wealthy notables set-up their own projects, while much funding is also channelled via the aforementioned 'family associations' (Baylouny 2006). Much of this development, as Mayssoun Sukarieh (2016) describes, seems focused on the creation of 'neoliberal subjects' through NGO-delivered entrepreneurship classes and microcredit schemes.³⁸ This has been accelerated by the post 2012 influx of Syrian refugees, spawning development initiatives in most major cities aimed not just at humanitarian relief but community development and capacity building (Twight 2016).

Even as such reforms and development projects fail on their own terms to bring about the desired economic effects,³⁹ funding continues. USAID (n.d) starts its country programme on Jordan with the assertion that the Hashemite Kingdom is 'a voice for moderation, peace and reform in the Middle East'. I will explore the consequences of these economic transformations at length, in particular regarding the political economy uniting East-Bankers with the royal house. For now, the key trend I seek to highlight is

³⁷ With the explicit aim of opening up the *Bādīyah* for investment, while maintaining and respecting the existing culture and habits (Badiyahfund.gov n.d), in effect maintaining the idea of the *Bādīya* as its own separate political space.

³⁸ Sukarieh's (2016:1203) central example involves the jaded trainer berating his class of would-be entrepreneurs for saying that they would at a pinch choose to use capital saved to start a business to help a neighbour in need. Relatedly in Chapter 6 I describe the angry reaction to government offers of income generation and business training in Dhiban, as an inducement to stop protesting.

³⁹ According to UNDP (2016), debt-to-national GDP stands at a record 91% and unemployment is officially at 30%, likely actually far higher when the large numbers of migrants excluded from the formal economy are considered. Personal remittances alone account for 14% of GDP, while unilateral aid from nation-states, mainly US and the Gulf states, account for 9% of government revenues (World Bank 2018).

an erosion of the post-independence *modus operandi* of the royal house and a destabilisation of relationships between the royal house and the East-Banker land-holding elites, coupled with a retreat of the state and welfare provision leading to an economic and ideological re-emphasise on ‘family associations’, patron-client networks and foreign aid. It is in this context that the current and apparently surprising resurgence of tribes in political life has taken place.

2 IN THE MARGINS: HISTORIES, MODELS AND INFRASTRUCTURES OF TRIBE

Ethnicity and tribe begin exactly where taxes and sovereignty end.

James Scott (2009:xii)

Characteristically the tribe is both an alternative to the state and also its image, its limitation and the seed of a new state.

Ernest Gellner (1983:38)

Places that succumb to the Bedouin are quickly ruined.

The *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldun (Mufti 2009:391)

The three epigraphs above suggest several competing conceptions of non-state space. They do however all express a common sense of opposition between states and settled life on the one hand, and on the other, tribes, with Bedouin and other mobile people being in a sense exemplary of ‘non-state’ society. The epigraph from Scott applies equally to the conception most Orientalists and earlier anthropologists had, and many might add ‘history’ to ‘taxes and sovereignty’ in the Middle East. This a-historical, kinship-dominated view was consistently applied to so-called segmentary societies, of which the nomadic-pastoralist areas of the Middle East were arguably the example *par excellence*. Such settings are historically constituted through marginality; they have since the first urban states arose, been represented as geographically and culturally marginal. More recently they have also been marginal to anthropology (Gilsenan 1990).

By describing my interlocutors as Bedouin and as associated with large categories of name/space, it may seem I have done little to refute this reading. Yet the link between these two descriptions suggests a way forward. The ‘tribalism’ of Bedouin seems to both outsiders and many Jordanians to be particularly strong and perhaps ancestral to that of other people, in part due to the associations of both being Bedouin and being ‘tribal’, suggestive of a certain relationship or disposition towards states and government. It is this political dimension that I intend to focus on in this chapter.

This emphasis on the political dimensions of being Bedouin is not novel. Indeed it inevitably comes to the fore with the erosion of the economic and lifeway-related elements of Bedouin identity, following decades of nomadic sedenterisation. Dawn Chatty (2006, 2014) has attended to the factors which have maintained or reproduced Bedouin identity in sedenterised contexts, and indeed has sought to decouple ‘Bedouin’ from nomadic-pastoralism in the present. William and Fidelity Lancaster (1986, 1987, 1989), who conducted long-term fieldwork among Ruwala Bedouin in Jordan and Syria came to a value-centred understanding of Bedouin. In the Lancasters’ account of the Ruwala and other North Arabian camel-herding Bedouin, nomadic pastoralism, and especially camel-herding in the desert interior, is an economic technique deployed for a political end: a ‘political response to centralized authority, a means of avoiding domination by settled governments’ (1990:178). As such, the key to explaining the continuing importance of Bedouin identity in the context of majority sedenterisation is to see it as ‘a political system and a political ideology, which can be expressed by Bedouin in a variety of ways’ (*ibid*:178-9) of which camel-herding was only one, and one which, as it becomes increasingly economically precarious and less generative of political autonomy, will clearly wane in importance.

The Lancasters’ vision of identity based on values and ideology – autonomy, ecological stewardship and strict codes of honour – is undeniably attractive, if perhaps romantic. Superficially it seems to align with the more recent work of Chatty’s experiential account of contemporary Bedouin identity claims in Syria and Lebanon, where despite governmental pressures ‘tribal identity’ has persisted, in part because ‘the authority attached to traditional leaders has continued to exist’ (2016:1), but also due to acts of political self-representation. Older ways of ‘being Bedouin’ were, in her analysis, fading into ‘political solidarity’. Political economy and sovereignty are therefore at the heart of Chatty’s analysis, rather than individualistic, voluntary ethical choices, as in the Lancasters’ writings. Their account (Lancaster and Lancaster 1986:42)

posits the role of the shaykh as being ‘to deal with outside agencies that could limit, extend or distort’ the interests and ideology of Bedouin tribesmen, in which role the shaykh had ‘no method of imposing his choices or decisions’.¹ I will develop a related argument but involving a somewhat different understanding of the role of shaykhs and men of influence. An immediate objection to the Lancasters’ voluntarist account of political formations is that it excludes all those in a subject position; most obviously slaves and hired labourers (economically important for most *Badu* shaykhs in the earlier 20th century), but also women, men who are not the heads of their own households and lesser associate lineages ‘covered’ by, but not quite possessing a name. A particular, patriarchal idea of sovereignty is embodied in the shaykhly head of a family, whose power flows out through interpersonal associations and genealogical connections (real or imagined) to include a wider political sphere. That such relationships are phrased as those of *qarāba* (relatedness) or *dam* (blood) does not make them any less political. Rather than shaykhs existing to prevent a distortion of moral life and social categories, I maintain that these categories of relationship and shaykhly projects of sovereignty, are co-emergent and co-producing.

In the Lancasters’ account and in other works, the shaykh, hierarchies and polities are treated as intrusions from the outside world of history and states into the Bedouin social universe. In this chapter I contend, following Judith Scheele (2019a), that given what we know of history, the people who get called tribal in the Middle East, far from being stateless and a-historic, defined by the absence of hierarchy and sovereignty and by egalitarianism, are in fact distinguished from the state through ‘different but mutually intelligible’ forms of sovereignty, morality and political economy. Crucially, as well as being potentially antithetical to the state, they can also constitute it, since ‘the state’ (which in some ways remains as much a discursive resource and categorical claim as ‘the tribe’ does) encompasses these other forms. My intention is not merely to rehearse the well-known deficiencies and representational issues of anthropological talk of tribes and segmentary societies, but to show that more serious problems of political anthropology lurk behind them, which we cannot easily dispense with; problematic notions of state and non-state, of public and private, and

¹ Bizarrely, the Lancasters (1986:42) also deny the possibility of a shaykh building up ‘patron/client relationships through generosity. The shaykh was expected to be generous but the return was the dissemination of his reputation rather than ties of dependency.’ How mere ‘reputation’ is prevented from becoming ‘ties of dependency’ is not made clear.

most importantly of the asymmetrical relations of enaction, protection and hospitality that define many ethnographic encounters with the tribe and the tribal in this context.

In scholarship and popular discourse, the ‘tribal’ has long taken on a particular set of complicated and often contradictory characteristics. Dale Eickelman outlined four broad ideological settings in which claims and definitions around ‘the tribal’ are made in the Middle Eastern context (Eickelman, 1989:127):

- i. Firstly ‘native’ ethnopolitical ideologies’ – that is local conceptions used explicitly in dialogue to explain a socio-political reality that is felt to exist.²
- ii. Secondly, legal-bureaucratic ideologies; ‘concepts used by state authorities for administrative purposes’.
- iii. Thirdly, implicit conceptions of lived reality used in common parlance and for practical purposes which are not held to be in the realm of ideology.
- iv. Fourthly and finally, ‘anthropological concepts’ of tribe, informed by various understandings of social life from other places.

I will return to Eickelman’s useful if simplified division later. As Layne (1984) makes clear, these broad settings of identity-making are not only overlapping, but each also actively affects and constitutes the others.

The ‘native ethnopolitical ideologies’ are, as we have seen so far, a topic alone of considerable complexity, but most scholars have tended to acknowledge a complex web of terms marking position on a gradient of livelihoods and also social role and power. For instance in Mary Wilson’s historic account (1987:57);

tribalism in Transjordan is not limited to nomads; rather the tribes of Transjordan filled every economic niche from nomadic camel breeders to settled farmers, forming a complex web of integrative social alliances.

It is the context of this web, which links many different modes of livelihood into a continuum, that makes these ideologies so interlinked. Throughout my fieldwork, population and electoral representation (forms of Eickelman’s second ideological setting) were used by interlocutors to situate their groups and as a boast of their strength and significance – for instance ‘the Hamaydah are the second biggest ‘*ashīrah* in Jordan’ or ‘the Zaban as-Sukhur often take a seat for the central Bedouin district’. These, in turn, are reflections of common parlance but reinforced by administrative categories and infrastructures; topics I explore towards the end of this chapter.

² Eickelman doesn’t define these ‘ideologies’ sufficiently to distinguish between local applications of wider nationalist logics and ‘naturalised’ ethno-cultural particularities.

‘Tribe’ and ‘tribalism’ are English words with a long conceptual genealogy within which ethnology and later anthropology have played large roles before largely seeking to abandon such terms (see for instance Sneath 2017, Southall 1970). They are far more than a neutral gloss for *qabīlah*/‘*ashīrah*.³ To assign a culture, a society or even a time or a space to ‘the tribal’ is to make certain assertions about its place in a hierarchy, or at least on a spectrum, of social types. Other notions of egalitarianism, autonomy, acephalous political orders and social relations based on kinship tend to creep in, as may troubling ideas of temporal distance (Fabian 2014). As the epigraphs suggests, these imaginaries suggest a certain relationship to the state (often one of absence). In Jordan, where many speak English, the media-Arabic adjective ‘*ashā’irīyah*’ has adopted many of the elements associated with the English term ‘Tribal’, though many also use the English term.

Yet this is not entirely a bleeding of meanings from English into Arabic. As the last epigraph hints, the use of *Badu* and Arabic terms like *qabīlah*/‘*ashīrah*’ (and their associate adjectival forms) have often been used in Arabic to convey a meaning surprisingly close to the usage of ‘tribe’ that anthropologists often find most problematic; as a short-hand for extra-governmental spaces beyond the city. In their Ottoman form, *bedevi* and *aşiret*, the terms were applied by administrators to nomads and various people who seemed to form some sort of political unit outside that of urban-based authorities (Barakat 2015:105). Similarly, Scheele (2019b:193) points out that *Bilad al-Qaba’il* (Kabiliya) in Algeria, a place of independent villages without strong ‘tribal’ groupings in the Arab or English sense, was given this name meaning ‘the land of tribes’, to reflect not a particular social form based on agnatic kinship, but rather a political reality; a lack of central authority and a non-subject relation to Ottoman authorities in the city of Algiers.

Arabic thought has long been in dialogue with European notions of the non-state barbarian, and partaken of parts of the same Classical genealogy that underlies it (Hill 2019). Ibn Khaldun throughout the *Muqaddima* uses *Badu* and ‘*A’rāb*’ interchangeably but variably, at times to refer to Arabic-speaking nomads, at other times to those who lived only a short way beyond city walls, but who were to a degree beyond the authority of city-based rulers (Irwin 2019). This usage blends in with his more well-known

³ Tildrick (1990) contends travelogues such as Doughty’s (1888) *Arabia Deserta* and the writings of Richard Burton influenced subsequent European thinking and depictions about the nature of nomads as ‘honourable’ and kin-focused while as discussed below, certain (English) readings of Arabic sources influenced segmentary theory.

concept of *‘asabīyah*, a term that at times is used with *qabīly* – ‘tribal’. Ibn Khaldun seems to have conceived of this as a property akin to group cohesion, solidarity and mutual trust that was, he argued, necessary for conquerors to form new polities, and was strongest among those beyond the realm of cities and states, among nomads and highlanders, but which declined within cities when these outsiders managed to establish a new dynasty. Through this lens Ibn Khaldun interpreted the cycles of dynasties that were so ubiquitous a part of the historical and political landscape of his world. The Arabic word for dynasty, *duwala*, also means a turn or rotation, and has slowly been re-purposed as the word for ‘state’. While the applicability and historicity of Ibn Khaldun’s thought has been debated endlessly within and beyond the social sciences (see for instance Mohammad 1998), its vision of the at-times antagonistic but intimate relationship between ‘states’ and those at their margins or beyond their control persists within and beyond the region. The conceptual frame apparent in the epigraph from Gellner which influenced many anthropologists working within what some term segmentary theory, clearly partakes in Ibn Khaldun’s historical vision. More recently, nineteenth century thinkers of the Arab *Nahda* adopted classical and European enlightenment civilizational hierarchies; for instance Rifa’a al-Tahtawi lists three ‘grades of civilisation’, placing the ‘Arabs of the desert’ not among the other nomads who he considered *mutahawashīn* (‘savages’) but in the second ‘barbarous’ category (*ahl al-khushūna al-mutabarbarīn* – lit. ‘the rough barbarian folk’), while the possessors of cities and states in the third – the *mutamaddinīn* (a term based on the Arabic root for a city) (Hill:2020:163).

This antithetical relationship between tribe and state, a central tenant of both much Arabic and European writing on the Ottoman-era Levant and Arabia, was reproduced and modified under colonial rule, and then decisively reshaped by proponents of modernisation theory (Mayhew 1985), where tribes were recast not as an alternative or rival to states, but as people and places in need of development. For many colonial and post-colonial states, the pacification and sedenterisation of non-state spaces became a symbolically charged proof of development and modernity (see Mitchell 2002, Scott 1998). This once seemed to be the ascendant discourse in Jordan too. As the state was subjected to development, many felt ‘tribes’ must wane. Yet here the debate took on a particular quality. Even as state services, sedenterisation and settlement expanded outwards into formerly ‘tribal’ zones, those who claimed power through being the representatives and leaders of ‘tribes’ retained political and military

significance, constituents of a network of patronage supporting key elite allies of the king. Marginality in Jordan for Bedouin meant something quite different to Syria or Egypt where urban elites dominated postcolonial politics and settling nomads was a mark of progress, or in Israeli-occupied Bedouin areas, where many Bedouin adopted the language of indigeneity to contest settler colonialism (see Yiftachel *et al.* 2016).

Anthropologist Linda Layne wrote that during her fieldwork in Jordan in 1984; (Layne, 1994:XIV).

a national debate on tribalism was under way. The question I was by that point focusing on, 'what does it mean to be a member of a tribe in contemporary Jordan' was, at least at that time, a question of national importance

That time, only eight years since the suspension of separate 'tribal law' by King Hussein, and when the wounds of a bloody civil war (Black September) were still raw, was one of great importance for attempts at identity formation (Anderson 2005). Since then, researching tribes has come to seem a cliché bordering on an anachronism in Jordan and indeed the wider Arab world.⁴ Scholars such as Leila Abu Lughod (1989) and Joseph Massad have formed compelling critiques based on Said, emphasising the colonial construction of tribalism, and its role in Orientalising Arab societies, and in maintaining ethnic division. Crucially, Massad (2001) argues persuasively that in the wake of 'Black September', King Hussein's government moved away from a developmental discourse which saw tribes and Bedouin as part of an at best folkloric past from which East-Bankers were emerging, and instead adopted a nationalised form of 'Bedouinisation'. This could become a national culture for the now-minority of East-Bank Jordanians in opposition to Palestinian and wider Arab Nationalisms. The role of Bedouin as '*awalad al-balad* - 'sons of the land' came to the fore, as did the symbols of the coffee pot, *mansaf* (a valorised dish of meat in a yoghurt sauce that is both 'national dish' and 'Bedouin heritage'), the red and white *shmargh* headscarf (as opposed to the black and white one made by the PLO into a symbol of Palestine). Within this new national culture 'The Bedouin are seen as carriers of Jordan's true and authentic culture and tradition... Bedouinising all Jordanians [was] a form of inoculating them against the Palestinian threat' (Massad 2001:277).

⁴ In fact, in a recent discussion among the 'Researching Jordan' Facebook group, 'tribe' was suggested as 'the most clichéd research topic in Jordan'.

Elements of this shift are clearly visible. Back in the 1960s, reformists in Jordan were speaking boldly about ending or overcoming tribalism and the tribal ‘mentality’. A broad developmental discourse of critique was germinating, inspired by Arab nationalism and global post-colonial developmentalism. Influential Jordanian academic Kamel Abu Jaber wrote in 1982 that loyalty to new groups such as labour unions and businesses and professional associations would replace the ‘automatic’ loyalty to tribes, as they were ‘on more rational bases’ (quoted in Layne, 1994:99). Then-journalist and later government minister Marwan Muasher was a fierce opponent of the dominance of tribal voting blocs in Jordanian elections, describing tribalism as a cultural anachronism perpetrated in order to maintain Jordan’s clientelist system. Under the culturalist and traditionalist garb there lay ‘an ossified layer of elites seeking to protect their own interests’ (Muasher 2011).⁵

In the run-up to the 1984 parliamentary elections, public statements against tribalism were widespread, describing it as anti-democratic, and comparing it in religious terms to the *Jahaliya* (the pre-Islamic ‘time of ignorance’). Many felt that official recognition of tribalism would be ‘overcome’ through development in the coming years. However, such commentators seem to have underestimated the degree of entanglement of ideas of large tribes and Bedouin-ness with the imaginary of the royal house and of Jordan as distinct from its ‘significant other’ in Palestine. Following this, in 1985 King Hussein wrote to Prime Minister Ahmad ‘Ubayda, demanding also that his letter be published across the country’s newspapers (Layne 1994:105). The Information Minister, Leila Shararaf, tendered her resignation in protest to this course of action, but her department published it without her. The letter’s central message was:

I have noticed some articles have been directed against the tribal life, its norms and traditions. I would like to repeat to you what I told a meeting of tribal heads recently, that ‘I am al- Hussein from Hashem and Quraish, the noblest Arab tribe of Mecca, which was honoured by God and into which was born the prophet Mohummad.’ Therefore, whatever harms our tribes in Jordan is considered harmful to us... and will continue so forever’.

⁵ Another journalist, Abdallah al-Khatib’s (Jan 1985) published a diatribe against tribalism in an article in the newspaper al-Rai; ‘any student of tribal concepts within our departments will realise that the unhealthy phenomena... will certainly prevent any reform or modernisation... [T]o apply the letter of the law to someone who has no backers in order that another backed person might jump over all kinds of laws and logic... will not only hinder the march of our administrative development... but will also ruin the march of our entire country’.

Since this intervention, attacks on tribalism have been more muted, and limitations on press freedom to report on ‘tribal matters’ have been put in place. This statement shows the importance the royal house attached to ideas of tribalism, which had become for them not only, as Massad argues, a way of forming a distinct ethno-national entity of Jordanians in opposition to Palestinians, but also as a legitimising discourse.

How to interpret this dramatic royal intervention? Massad’s critical post-colonial reading links the retrenchment of tribalism in Jordan with the position of King Hussein post-1970, having faced military failure in Palestine, military and civil conflict with Palestinians within Jordan, and an increasing reliance on the post-colonial powers that he had once tried to balance against anti-colonial Arab nationalism. Facing this delegitimisation of his kingship and of Jordan as a nation-state spanning both sides of the Jordan, he and his government used various pre-existing elements to hand to create a new exclusionary imaginary of the nation-state.

As we have seen, by the 1980s, as the existential threat to the royal house from Palestinian resistance fighters faded, the modernist, developmental, critical view of tribes and tribalism was again gaining traction, espoused by opponents of what they saw as clientelist and rentier politics. Yet by this point, Hussein and his inner circle seem to have concluded that the reliance on East-Banker political mediators and brokers, long a marked feature of efforts to hold together a state in Jordan, was now too closely intertwined with the survival of the royal house to allow a change of direction, and as such the legitimising and culturalising language of *‘ashīrah* and of a noble, hospitable tradition, became key national dogmas. This now favoured ‘face’ of the state (to borrow Navarro-Yashin’s (2002) formulation) was patriarchal and paternalistic, presenting Jordan as a family-tribe, and the king as father-shaykh, and reproducing and conflating at various scales the authority of the king and of the senior male agnate over his subordinates. This discourse further strengthened the relationship between the royal house and the elite strata of patrons and men of influence, whose own symbolic power was also thus buttressed. Being of an *‘ashīrah*, and thus to be subject to its senior members, became part of being a Jordanian, tacitly excluding those for whom this type of identity was less relevant, or forcing them to adopt this mediated and semi-public political form themselves, perhaps in the process weakening other types of solidarity, for instance along lines of class, occupation or even as Palestinians.

This is a compelling narrative, and one I will return to in the final section of this chapter, where I consider the infrastructural realities which make such discourses

compelling and meaningful. Yet within this narrative, the history of the pre-existing elements from which Hussein created this new nationalism are obscured. I wish to bring these elements back into focus, whilst not losing sight of the important social critiques above. As well as the considerable colonial underpinnings (which I examine below), these elements included the longstanding and widespread discourse of ‘nostalgic Bedouinism’ (Hill 2020:81)⁶, (pre-?)Ottoman political techniques based around hospitality and protection, and the traditional alliances with nomadic pastoralist warriors dating from the Arab revolt or before. This is not to downplay the importance of British colonial divide and rule policies which made certain Bedouin tribes a legally distinct and militarily favoured category, but merely to suggest that these policies and what came afterwards did not spring from nothing more than the colonial imagination.

This touches upon the debate between some scholars, exemplified by Massad (2001, 2007), who see Jordanian tribalism as a shallow, constructed tool, serving specific interests of the state, and others such as Shryock (1997), Hughes (2018) and Tariq Tell (2001, 2013) who to varying degrees take ‘tribes’ seriously, generally at a level below that of the state or of national discourse, but with important points of contact with it. For Massad (2001:277) ‘Bedouinization’ is an ‘imposed colonial discourse... Like other post-colonial national identities, Jordanian national identity and Jordanian national culture are products and effects of colonial institutions’. This is surely true as far as it goes, but seems ethnographically unsatisfactory, and as I have already argued, historically extremely limiting, obscuring the reasons why it was this particular category or identity label of ‘Bedouin’ that colonial institutions decided to make their tool. I therefore aim to take something of a middle-course. I argue that a number of diverse phenomena, where state facilitation occurs, act as infrastructures for such identity formations. I return to the specifics of these infrastructures later, but for now I focus on the role of leadership and power, both recent historical and contemporary forms of politics and their conceptual underpinnings.

2.1 Sovereignty and the Weight of Names

We have seen how, in part for reasons of national and nationalist politics, certain elites, with origins in East-Banker, rural constituencies, were able to survive and outlast their

⁶ Peter Hill (2020) makes clear that *Nahda* literature from nineteenth century Syria revived various classical Arabic literary troupes, including the purity, nobility and simplicity of the Bedouin life and culture.

modernist and reformist critics, and to ensure the continuation and perhaps intensification of a discourse of tribalism on which their positions relied. I will now analyse the nature of the power of these elite figures, and how it is reproduced at different scales of society. For the scholars and journalists who criticised tribalism in the 1970s and 1980s, tribal leaders and law systems were in a sense extra-state or para-legal. In more recent state discourse they have become a subservient ally to their state equivalents, whom they reference, in a manner that fits well with Sally Merry's (1988) discussion of 'legal pluralism'. However, in many contexts and for many people such things *are* the state, or rather the way in which the state is accessed, mediated and interacted with, via shaykhs and other notables capable of tapping into networks extending to the summit of the state to get things done. Rather than being a traditional set of practices recognised by the State that people may engage with voluntarily, allowing for 'forum shopping' (Merry 1988), engaging with shaykhs and tribes, but also family associations and other forms of patron, are the only way to get things done.

These patrons are people who are 'known' (*m'aruf*), said to be 'respectable' (*muhtrim*), possessors of reputation which, like the names of categories of '*ashīrah*', are thought to carry certain moral characteristics. From the beginning, the rule of the royal house has been through something like 'the exercise of sovereign power through a discipline of interpersonal association', a mode of sovereignty that Meeker (2002:118) describes in late- and post-Ottoman north-eastern Anatolia.

Meeker argued that the area of Turkey he worked in had been wrongly classified as a 'clan' society co-opted by the Ottoman empire, which had proven to be too weak to replace this power structure in so remote a province. Even his interlocutors, he reports, like most historians of Jordan, have assumed that 'clannishness' and the rise of local dynasts in the late empire was the result of weak central authority; imperialism and clan/tribe being 'two incompatible forms of sovereign power' (2002:21). However, by focusing on the heads of lineages, using the honorary title of *agha*, Meeker argues:

they were able to do what the proper imperial system could do: to deploy the sovereign power of a family line through a following based on a discipline of interpersonal association. The rise of regional social oligarchies can therefore be understood as coincident with the dissemination of an imperial tactic; the exercise of sovereign power by means of a discipline of interpersonal association.'

Instead of emerging out of a failure of empire, Meeker argues the appearance of clans and lineages were in fact a result and facet of Ottoman imperialism.⁷ ‘from centre to periphery... they were the result of the spread of ethical practices of political authority’ (Meeker 2002:349).

It is beyond both the scope of this dissertation and my knowledge of Ottoman sources to attempt to adapt Meeker’s specific argument about the nature of cosmopolitan but also sovereign Ottomanism in North East Anatolia to Jordan and Greater Syria (although there is plentiful literature to attempt an Arabic genealogy of similar concepts). The broader point is that much that can be interpreted through the lens of genealogy, lineage and agnatic kinship can also be seen through the lens of sovereignty, power and hierarchy. ‘*Aghas* create clans, clans do not create *aghas*’, Meeker (2002:342) contends. The same could almost be argued for shaykhs and ‘*asha’ir* in contemporary Jordan, where politics also involves enacting and being subject to sovereignty via techniques of interpersonal association, a technique that mirrors and relies upon the hierarchies of the house, and its age-based and gendered divisions of bodies and spaces. This technique of sovereignty has become a key imaginary of the state and the royal house, and a method of encompassing such spaces. Thus the state presents itself as a family or a house, with a benevolent patriarch at its head.

Meeker’s use of sovereignty in this dynamic, which I have followed, diverges somewhat from the standard usage in social theory or anthropology. While *saytarah* (lit. ‘control’) has a roughly similar range of meanings in Arabic, I am not using it here as an ethnographic term, but as a comparative heuristic. Even then, I am not so much thinking of the Foucauldian concept, nor of Agamben’s state of exception, although the ability to not only enact and embody but also to define taxonomies is present in the case of shaykhs via hospitality, dispute resolution and offering protection and patronage, as we shall see. Nor am I entirely thinking of the common usage of autonomy and self-rule or self-subjection, although again as we shall see, the idea of certain spaces and people forming pre-existing and self-constituted political units and of being inherently resistant to outside rule (those that ‘cannot be eaten’ as I explore in Chapter 5) does

⁷ Meeker himself at times seems conflicted over this argument, acknowledging that the breakdown in the 17th century of former practices of circulating provincial officials (designed to avoid just such a situation of officials developing a local power base and passing on their power dynastically) led to the development of such techniques of sovereignty beyond the imperial court. Maybe if not a feature of imperial weakness, it is a feature of a certain type of imperial practice.

touch upon this also. Rather I am keeping the term open and hovering between its various connotations. I find some of this flexibility in Graeber's (2019:378) broad definition of an ability 'to "lay down the law," either literally or figuratively' by both being able to break and define accepted rules of conduct, while often being highly circumscribed by other rules. This sovereignty does not require the absolute of the sovereign in European political philosophy, but can be nested, encompassed and limited. Like Meeker I see sovereignty here as interpersonal, but I also wish to emphasise its representative quality. This representativeness is two-fold: firstly, they are representative in that shaykhs, but increasingly other types of patron, seek to make themselves exemplary, to be representative of a valorised cultural tradition. Secondly and more importantly, the shaykh claims leadership and a degree of status through an ability to represent, mediate and broker between clients and the state. If they can convince the state that those they represent are difficult to govern, fierce, and unlikely to submit to sovereignty, and convince their own people that the state is hostile, corrupt and bureaucratically impenetrable, so much the better for their position.

This sense of a technique of sovereignty through interpersonal association is not merely of historical interest. In the last three decades state retreat and putative market liberalisation have been coupled with a mushrooming of formal and informal kin networks and associations furthering the personalisation of politics. This blends almost seamlessly with the more general concept found throughout the Arabic-speaking Middle East of *wāstah* (lit. 'intermediate'), meaning getting things done through interpersonal networks and intermediaries, relying on influence and reputation, rather than through official channels or formal structures. The term refers to both the process of getting things done in this way, and the person who acts as an intermediary or patron to get things done. It can also be an attribute, so that people or groups can be said to possess 'strong' *wāstah*.

When asking Hamid Dahamshah one day about how one went about getting a government job he told me 'you need a *wāstah*. You need someone with a name, *y'ani* a heavy name.' Though Jordanians generally are quick to distinguish the discourse of *wāstah* from talk of the 'tribal' they intersect and share a concern with names. This idea of names having 'weight', of conferring influence through the way they join the reputations of people to those of others with different levels of power and prestige, is implicit throughout Jordanian society, and certainly underlies contemporary understandings of what being part of an '*ashīrah*' means. It is the quality of 'weight',

and of certain names having more than others, that allows a technique of power to be built on interpersonal associations.

Wāstah is often the subject of developmental reforms funded by the World Bank and encouraged in the IMF's economic plan for Jordan, and of the ire of some anti-corruption activists. Yet for many Jordanians it remains a separate phenomenon to corruption (*fasād* – a term meaning both moral corruption and physical decay and rot), especially where the latter is seen as something that happens among the very powerful and great at the top of the system. At the same time, my interlocutors often denied the immorality of small acts of rule-bending to help friends and relatives. Indeed, even Osama, an anti-corruption activist associated with Dhiban Hirak, told me when discussing his hopes of a job via a cousin that to fail to help family or associates when able to would itself be morally wrong (*haram*). Meanwhile true 'corruption', as we will see in Chapters 5 and 6, tends not to conform to common neoliberal notions of individual malpractice, but rather is seen as structural and based around issues of distribution rather than legality, and as such is often at odds with developmental and international definitions. Indeed, one of the main examples of corruption given by young men involved in protests was the process of privatisation and investment that had happened over the last two decades (discussed in Chapter 6), undertaken under the guidance of the IMF and World Bank's structural adjustment programme.

Many interlocutors who acknowledged a crisis of corruption, sometimes even linking this to *wāstah*, suggesting that to treat kin and friends the same as strangers – the supposed ideal of neoliberal reformers and anti-corruption specialists – is not only immoral but socially impossible.⁸ For instance, Khalid, who worked in the Municipal Ministry, told me that everyone went through training about not showing favouritism, and would if asked agree in general terms that, for instance, choosing to bring a relative to the front of a queue for a government service is *fasād*, or at least potentially malpractice. Yet it is none-the-less reputation-enhancing and honourable to favour kin over strangers, and difficult to refuse to do so, given the potential reputational consequences, which could damage future prospects when seeking assistance in turn. For my friend Said, a journalist living in West Amman, breaking with his father's relatives, a tribe from Karak, was key to his sense of independence, and in a sense of

⁸ Sukarieh (2017) makes similar observations in relation to her ethnography of a series of business transparency workshops put on by NGOs for the urban poor in Amman, which seek to impart a profit-maximising disposition among their attendees, often meeting considerable resistance when set against social expectations.

self-realisation, the moment when he felt he was ‘strong’. ‘My uncles, after my father was dead, would always interfere with us [Said and his siblings], they would say they would help, and then if we didn’t want their help, we had offended their honour.’ He admitted that they had helped him and his brother get jobs using their contacts, but when they tried to determine how and with whom Said lived, and to prevent his sister travelling abroad alone for a sporting event, he said ‘I broke all contact, and I haven’t seen any of these idiots in years. It is very easy to be in these families, if you obey, everything is taken care of. Only the strong can break away, and do things on their own... You need *wāstah* here, but too much is very bad, and it is better to find your own contacts than relying on your family’.

Ethnographically, talk of *wāstah* intersects with discourses of corruption, even as most people regard the concepts as, at least in theory, separate. A comparison can be made with anthropological literature on corruption discourses, especially around how these serve at once to critique systems and power structures, offering moral absolution for bribe-givers, while at the same time benefiting a class of brokers and intermediaries who come to appear through such a discourse to be indispensable. Jonathan Parry’s (2000) analysis of broker-ship in getting jobs in a steel works in Bhilai suggested that much ‘corruption’ was in fact an ‘optical illusion’; offering little real tangible benefit for bribe-givers, sustained by brokers whose entrepreneurial interests are served by maintaining a widespread belief in the prevalence and efficacy of corruption. Certainly in Jordan both tribal shaykhs and possessors of *wāstah* more generally benefit from and to some extent encourage the perception that their services are indispensable. Equally a widespread sense of a crisis of ‘corruption’ coincides with a general sense of ‘realism’ about the necessity of *wāstah*, which allows absolution for individuals who make use of such a system to achieve ends they believe can only be achieved in this way. This is especially so given the way *wāstah* intersects with wider ways of reckoning social relationships according to names and reputations, including categories of name/space, where ideas of debt and obligation also come up against notions of shared honour.

As with many anthropological accounts of discourses of corruption and patronage (for instance Hart 1985; Nordstrom 2004), clear distinctions and boundaries between the official bureaucratic procedures of the public realm and the ‘informal’ sphere of *wāstah* and known-ness dissolve on close inspection. As we will see, the ‘state’ as an entity in Jordan is inseparable from these other shadow forms. Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993:14) refer to government in Jordan as ‘contract-based *wāstah*’.

Names and reputations exist at least partly independently from official offices and titles. The quality of being ‘known’ is key to claiming and maintaining shaykhly status, but also to a political career. One of the main ways in which the royal house has come to encompass name/space categories is by offering recognition to shaykhs and tribal judges (discussed later in this chapter), giving them titles and position and granting them small favours to keep their clients coming to them, thus not only recognising, but decisively adding, to the weight of certain names.

The ability to deliver *wāstah* is deeply entangled with hospitality. The resources and skill to successfully enact hospitality, described in detail in Chapter 4, are associated more than perhaps any other virtue with shaykhly-ness. As an exemplar for a wider type of social agent, the shaykh remains potent. The deeds of shaykhs are the stuff of historical narrative among Jordanian Bedouin, and they still provide a central point of materialisation for increasingly diffuse networks, attending funerals, weddings and other social occasions, and entertaining often. Most crucially they are still treated as important representatives and intermediaries with the people within their named groups by the Government, and as such, through this access, are also normally able to offer *wāstah* to clients. Through this and in some cases through various processes of land registration, many are considerably richer than average. The idealised conception of the shaykh, as it was explained to me, was a man who bankrupts himself for his people, but also manages to maintain the outward trappings of status, to keep up the reputation of his name. In the figure of the shaykh, individual honour and reputation becomes entangled with the honour of other bearers of a name. The dynamic of this relationship, which I suggest is best described as a patron-client relationship (despite the Mediterraneanist baggage (Ben-Yehoyada 2016), the dyadic relational term is a useful shorthand), is often much the same as the seemingly less archaic and more generalised enactment of *wāstah*. While increasingly in a world of wealthy business-owners and powerful office-holders these names are individual and it is jobs, contracts or bureaucratic procedures that *wāstah*-clients seek, the logic of names is still present. The entanglement of individual reputation and honour with that of larger categorical names is still also in evidence.

When asking Rayan al-Fayiz, a young horse-breeder and trainer of the Bani Sakhr’s paramount shaykhly lineage what being of al-Fayiz and Bani Sakhr meant for him in practice he told me among other things ‘we are treated with respect. If there is a problem with the police, they will not arrest us straight-away. The governor or a

minister will call up the shaykh, he will talk, he will ask after him, he will invite him to come drink coffee. They will find a solution God-willing. If others make trouble, they [the security services] will put them in prison’.

I heard a similar answer from Nur, an American-educated acquaintance of mine, who worked in a major international development organisation. She expressed doubts about my plan to conduct research with the Bani Sakhr, and she warned me most of all to keep away from the Fayiz family – ‘they are dangerous, they cause so much trouble.’ I asked her what she meant, and was told that some years before, a distant cousin of hers had been killed in a hit and run car accident at night by a teenager from al-Fayiz. Witnesses saw what happened and he was eventually arrested. Although the family of the dead man is large and powerful in Jordan, and includes politicians, Nur told me that within three days the driver was released to his family. ‘That’ she said ‘is tribalism... It is trouble’ (interview in English).

Later, once I had got to know some al-Faiyz individuals, I asked Rayan al-Fayiz about this story (without revealing my source or any identifying details). He told me he thought it was lies at first and pressed me for a source. I demurred, and he seemed to change his mind. ‘Things like this happen, yes. But the story doesn’t tell everything truly’. Crucially for Rayan it left out that the Fayiz antagonists would, he felt sure, have paid a great amount of compensation, *diyyah*, in order to attain a truce with the victim’s family, even if they avoided criminal justice. ‘What good would it do anyone for the driver to stay in prison – it doesn’t help the dead man’s family, and it is shameful for the Fayiz to be pushed around by the police.’ This expresses a version of the common maxim used by proponents of tribal justice and dispute resolution in Jordan; ‘prison is loss’. We will return to the mechanisms of dispute resolution towards the end of this chapter, but for now the point is the way such processes deploy and make use of names, and how some names are given more weight than others.

The idea of being assigned to names on the basis of agnation, which carry with them certain relational roles, statuses and oppositions may seem alarmingly close to discarded anthropological ideas from the early twentieth century, and in particular to the idea of segmentary societies. Clearly names have power in most social contexts, but the known-ness of names and their weight are perhaps more a feature of some places, like Jordan and in particular rural Jordan, than others. As stated, even taxi drivers from elsewhere will say ‘this is a Sukhur village’ and will have certain ideas about what the Sukhur are like. As an outsider without much local knowledge, what is more, these sorts

of labelling and categorising exercises are an easy way for people to give the ethnographer the sort of information they assume they ought to be given. As such, when conducting interviews around topics of family history and long-term political relationships, my interlocutors often responded to my questions unbidden by drawing detailed if often contradictory genealogical diagrams (See Figures 2.1-2.3). The ‘tree’ diagram (*shajjarah al-nasab*), as known in Arabic as it is in European genealogy, has a dual role of both recording actual genealogy (often with corroborated accuracy over many centuries) but also political relationships (Kennedy 1997).

These diagrams can have an explanatory use at quite a granular level. On one occasion when I asked my friend Osama about why he did not support a particular parliamentary deputy in Madaba, he drew me a rough diagram to explain how the family of the politician and his own stood in a relation of antagonism to one another, explaining the point at which a disagreement had emerged over the high-handed refusal of a marriage in the 1980s, and how successive generations had stoked it as the politicians family had become much wealthier and more successful. He padded this incident with a far larger story of overweening pride, as the family of the politician sought to claim a higher status than they had once (supposedly) had. Yet crucially, such diagrams, as this incident shows, can explain events through describing relations; they are not a form of segmentary determinism.

These diagrams can expand outwards to far greater scales. When a large entity like the Bani Sakhr or the Shammar are represented in this form, the status of the names becomes increasingly ambiguous, hovering between known individuals, mythical progenitors and categorical names for large groups entering into alliances with others. At the highest levels often no actual *qara’ib* (kinship) was known, and the creators of such diagrams generally stated bluntly that these were not real relationships of father and son between individuals but alliances between larger groups. Most of my Bani Sakhr interlocutors acknowledged that there was no single known ancestor uniting all the Sukhur. This is common to other groups, such as the ‘Abbad or the Balgawiyah alliance, who see themselves as a *qabīlah* but one bound by shared social and political entanglements, not by ancestry (Shryock 1997). Often the split between two names on the diagram would be traced to a specific event or character, who disputed leadership with a brother, or lead his followers away into a new area, or of a protégé, son-in-law or adoptee who usurped their erstwhile host and benefactor. These diagrammatic sketches, created for my benefit to explain obvious social realities to ignorant outsider, mirrored

the more complex recitations of *gas* – formal lineage poems, which now only certain important older men know and recite. The young men who drew me such diagrams would do so while claiming to be unqualified in such matters, referring me always to older kin. Often these old men would ask to see what I had been given, and would patiently correct them.

When seeking for such narratives I was often told that Shaykh X or Hajj Y ‘had’ (rather than merely knowing) strong history (*‘aindu tarīkh gawy’*). I showed one Dahamshah friend, Abdalaziz, Hamid’s older brother, my copy of Mithqal al-Fayiz’s biography. Abdalaziz took a more active interest in history than most men his age, and while he was interested in the old pictures, was scornful of Mithqal and the Fayiz.

They hold the shaykh mashayyakh because the Government says so. And why did the Amir Abdallah say so? Because Mithqal could be bought. He was not in Thuwra al-‘Arabiya. [‘the Arab Revolt’]. He was never known to be generous, or have victories in battle. He lived where? Not in a baīt sh’ar [goat-hair tent – lit. ‘house of hair’] or with his people and the herds, but in Amman with his wife. And he helped who? His grandsons, Faisal and Ghaleb, he helped Akif his son. He did not help the Sukhur. You should not read their history. My uncles will give you the true history of the Bani Sakhr, the history of the Dahamshah also.

How this ‘true’ history (*tarīkh sahy*), and the history of the Dahamshah from their perspective might differ he did not explain. Later he and his older brother Saif sat me down to receive this history. They began by drawing me a genealogical tree (*shajjarah al-nasab*) of Sukhur lineages, although as each is in effect represented through an apical ancestor, the difference is not always straightforward. Saif then began a narrative, which he said he had heard from his uncles, to explain the drawing.

Long ago, al-Fayiz was an orphan. An orphan in Hijaz. Who took him in, and raised him on milk from his own women, and gave to him from his own flock? Al-Dahamshah al-Kabir [the old], my ancestor, took him in. The Sukhur then had no common roots, their origins were each their own. Then in that time the Dahamshah and some others [he listed some other noteworthy ‘original’ sections], they came together in war, against the ‘Anazah, against the Bani Harb, against the Bani kether kether [‘so on and so forth’]. Then when they came north, al-Fayiz was given the land in the west, not important land, but generous. When the Government came they

claimed this land as their own, and farmed it and sold it for money, I mean, for profit. All the land, they registered it in their name, and the state registered it to them. This was not their land, it was land for all the people, not for the Shaykh alone. They intermarried with us, but were never above us, except later, when they became rich. The Government called Mithqal 'Shaykh Mashayyakh', not the Sukhur. This [pointing at the book] is all lies.

This exchange, important for many reasons, ended with Abdalaziz and his older brother Saif spending half an hour writing and arguing about a diagram (Figure 2.2) that would reveal this scandalous true history, but which neither of them could agree on absolutely.

Figure 2.1: Tree diagram of the vast international Shammar *qabīlah*, reproduced from a poster in the possession of Hamīd bin Lufān ash-Shammari. The names refer both to (theoretically) eponymous apical progenitors and to historically existing settings.

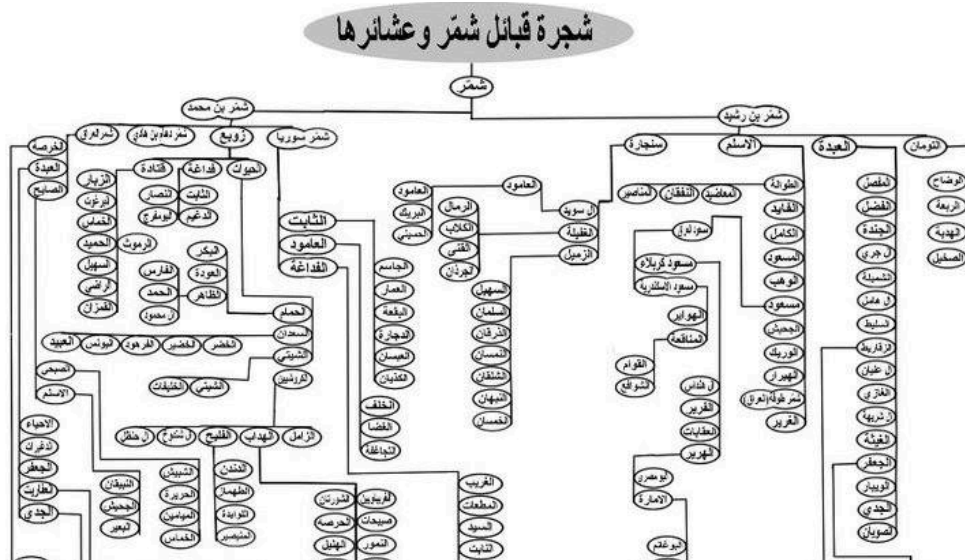


Figure 2.2: The Dahamshah brother's tree diagram and contested lineage list with historical relationships for the Bani Sakhr.

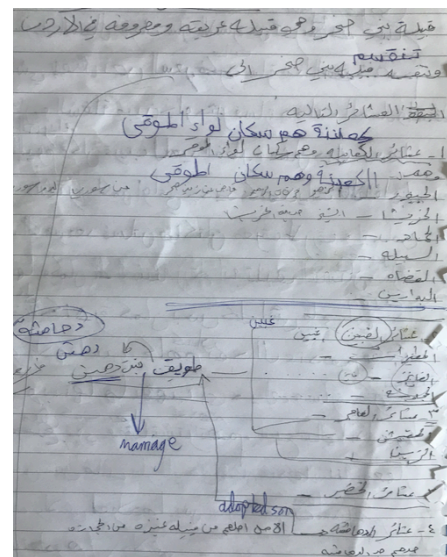
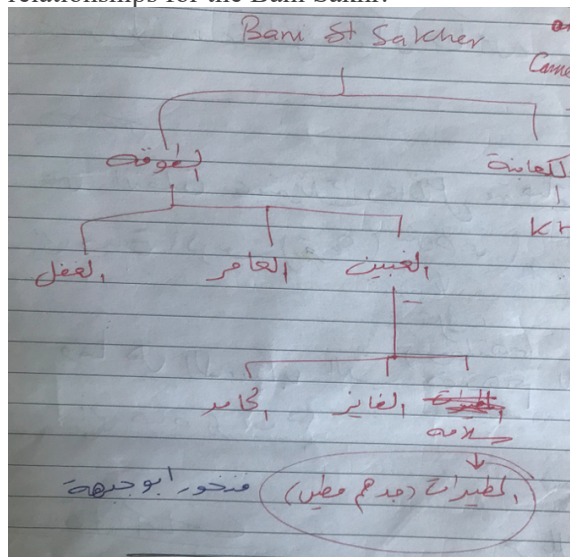
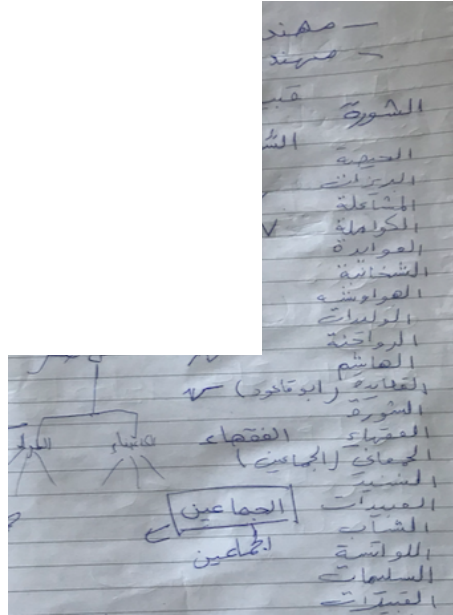


Figure 2.3: List and annotations (including a tree) of the main sections and divisions of the Bani Hamida, by Osama.



This casts light on the difficulties of working with this type of intensely localised, relational and positional history, as Andrew Shryock (1997) has already adeptly described. The way such historical reputations work, through hospitality, protection and war, suggests something of the core political relationship that lies within the trappings of genealogy and tribe. To return to Meeker's (2002:342) statement that '*Aghas* create clans, clans do not create *aghas*', I contend shaykhs, sovereignty and large political projects have, in some senses, reproduced if not created 'tribes'. Men able to attract followers in turn can claim to others that they represent these followers. Equally they can claim to their followers that they are uniquely able to intercede with these others. They become specialist intermediaries and representatives. This form of political mediation is doubtless far older than the Ottoman Empire. It is intriguing to analyse this cluster of meanings in terms of Bourdieu's concept of 'practical taxonomy' or Taxonomic power. This is the way in which an elite attempts

to impose the taxonomy most favourable to its characteristics, or at least to give to the dominant taxonomy the content most flattering to what it has and what it is.

(Bourdieu 1984:475-6). But the nature of this taxonomic power, of the politics or sovereignty of representation, protection and patronage, exhumes two troubling anthropological ghosts. One, as already mentioned, is the assumption of bounded groups in an event-determining structure of balanced opposition – segmentation. I will deal with that in the next section. The other, as hinted at through the reference to Bourdieu, is honour. The idea of honour as a specific type of disposition and a certain

project of reputation-making, runs thread-like through the following ethnographic chapters. I use it not because of its alien/essentialist connotations, as something uniquely ‘Arab’ or even less ‘tribal’ but because, as Shryock (2009) argues for the crucial sub-field of honour, ‘hospitality,’ it is a concept that is ‘recognisable’ and indeed also runs through European critical theory (for instance Kant and Derrida), as an idea, a thought-experiment, and an explanatory tool.⁹ As a term of analysis it links European critical theory with Arabic ideas, in particular the concepts of *sharaf* (‘honour’) and *wajah* (‘face’).

Honour, in Bourdieu’s (1979:211) sense, is ‘the basis of the moral code of an individual who sees himself always through the eyes of others.’ Like the units in segmentary theory, for Bourdieu it relies on the idea of theoretical and categorical comparability, if not quite equality, between individuals or groups in competition, and yet the very process of ‘competing’ for honour is generative of inequalities and hierarchies; there are tensions within an idea of honour as ‘isotomy’ or ‘competing to remain equal’ (Bailey 1971:19).

Any discussion of ‘honour’ and its theoretical corollary, shame, is likely to be associated with out-dated anthropological projects seeking a pan-Mediterranean cultural unit of comparison, especially Pitt River’s (1977) and Gilmore’s (1982) various works. Naor Ben-Yehoyada (2016 n.p.) summarises the problem with such work in relation to the long deployment of this concept in the context of Mediterranean Anthropology, especially the tension over egalitarian and hierarchical readings of honour within a society:

Why should we gloss onore, nif, and egoismos as the English honour? The honour and shame complex was defined as a behaviour of ‘competing to remain equal’ (Bailey 1971:19); as an ‘emphasis ... on the virginity and the chastity of women’ (Schneider 1971:2); and as ‘a system of stratification [that] describes the distribution of wealth in a social idiom’ (Davis 1977: 98), to cite only key examples. The first of these definitions makes honour an egalitarian struggle up a hill of material or other forms of stratification... The second definition explains regional prevalence of an attitude by a

⁹ In anthropology, hospitality as a topic was treated ethnographically but not theoretically (with a few notable, and mostly Mediterraneanist, exceptions, such as Pitt-Rivers 1968), however in recent years, Shryock has gained colleagues in this area, as a more theoretical turn to hospitality has taken place, with a JRAI special issue (Candea and Da Col 2012) and a Cumulus issue of L’Homme (see Sneath 2019).

recurrence of a structural feature of its political economy: 'a highly competitive relationship between agricultural and pastoral economies' and 'the absence of effective state institutions' (Schneider 1971: 2–3). The third definition claims the opposite: it reduces a form of behaviour to the social standing that it is claimed to mark.

This plurality of definitions, emerging from various Mediterranean contexts, may seem to preclude comparison. It is not just anthropologists, but some educated Jordanians who find an analysis in terms of 'honour' problematic. There are troubling associations with *qātil dafa ash-sharf* 'honour killings' (not that these are a particularly Jordanian problem) and *thār*, revenge or feud. Yet for proponents being honourable or respected is not just a matter of fierceness, it is also a matter of being frank and sincere in ones' dealings with others, and for the *kubār* (the 'big' and respected figures of a family or tribal category), it is this frank honesty, almost bluntness, combined with mutual respect which marks the idealised form of public speech. Hospitality, politics, dispute resolution and poetry sometimes require modes of elevated speech and formal polite formulas, but speech should never be servile or too flattering, even with shaykhs. This egalitarian speech does not preclude hierarchical relationships, especially in interactions between host and guest, or the asker and the giver of favours, but is nonetheless important for one's reputation as an honourable subject.

I have kept the term honour in play despite these difficulties because many things were explained to me through ideas of maintaining or expanding honour during fieldwork. The term my interlocutors used for this generally was *sharaf* (etymologically linked to ideas of nobility) but the idea of *hurma* which Bourdieu's (1979) analysis is based upon, also occurred, mostly in the form of *haramat al-baīt* – the 'sanctity' or 'inviolability of the house', related to the common term *muḥaram* to refer to female kin. The root of *haram* – referring to that which is sacred, forbidden, or 'set aside' is highly suggestive of the uncomfortable ambiguities of honourable-ness, that it carries within itself vulnerability to the loss of honour. The idea of *ird* – the sexualised honour that rests in women, and of *ayb* – 'shame' were not as frequently deployed in the kind of explanatory narratives I was treated to when I questioned things I had seen or conversations I had overheard, but rested behind all sorts of things that were explained away to me though utterances of *ath-thukafah mukhtalif* – 'the culture is different' – for instance when apologetically explaining situations where my hosts wished to impose gendered segregation on my wife and I during visits, or explain a decision they felt we

might disapprove of, such as denying a daughter's request to work away from home in Amman.

More compelling for my decision to start 'taking honour seriously' than explanatory usage was my interlocutors' insistence that I engage with it as a practical dimension of my social life. I was constantly being warned of the danger to my reputation through gossip, of the need to ration information I gave out, to learn to turn aside intrusive questions about my marriage, my salary and my family, as do Jordanians. Most intricate of all, the world of giving and receiving hospitality and dealing with various types of invitation presented me with the necessity to enter into this field.

Connected to this, and especially closely associated with ideas of '*ashā'irīyah*' and of Bedouin, is the idiom of *wajah*, 'face'. Faces can be individual or collectively held by families, lineages, the co-liaible group of a *khamsat ad-dam* and even larger concepts, including the nation. They can become, as I will describe later, 'blackened' (as can a name in English) through insults or slights done against it, and whitened through answering such slights appropriately. The face, a site where the reputations of selves become entangled, is both a justification for normative judgements on behaviour, and a field in which competition for reputation takes place. To have face is about keeping one's home and kin inviolable and protected, but also resolving disputes with grace and generosity at the correct time. To not care about these things is to have a cold face (*wajah bard*) – an accusation often levelled at the urban cosmopolitan wealthy. This idiom of face, described in more detail in Section 2.3, connects with broader ideas of reputation, 'known-ness', and the normative power of gossip. If as Shryock (1997) maintains, ethnography is a labour of 'shared objectification', then the mode of objectification chosen by the ethnographic host is revealing. I contend these idioms, the language of honour, is more central to the conceptual constitution of categories of name/space than that of kinship, blood and genealogy. It involves sensitivity to the reputation of names, a type of prickly, fiercely honour-conscious disposition coupled with extravagantly generous and well-mannered hosting, all mimicking the forms of sovereignty deployed by shaykhs. Honour, then, is about testing and possessing sovereignty, and through this, claiming to represent and be able to intercede for others. This is the essential conceptual background to what I term representative sovereignty.

2.2 The Mosaic and the Segment: lenses, models and problematic contexts in the anthropology of the Middle East

The assumption that Arabs belong to easily recognizable corporate social groups is one that has dogged Middle Eastern ethnography throughout its history.

Linda Layne (1994:5)

As Abu-Lughod (1989) and Layne (1994) have pointed out, the twin models of the segmentary triangle and the mosaic were long the favoured lenses through which the Euro-American scholarly gaze fell on Arabic speaking peoples. Segmentation is in many ways a particularly heavily theorised manifestation of the general idea of the mosaic. This term gained popular traction when used by the American adventurer and sometime-anthropologist Carlton Coon. Credited by Slyomovics (2013) as introducing the Middle East as an area for ethnographic and anthropological study to America, Coon wrote in 1958 in the introduction to his popular book *Caravan* that ‘the most conspicuous fact about Middle Eastern civilisation is that in each population the country consists of a mosaic of peoples’ (Coon 2011:3). The ‘pieces’ of this mosaic are variously described by Coon as religious sects, occupational groups, tribes or other linguistic-cultural units. He writes that though ‘the old mosaic system and modern nationalism are clearly incompatible’, a theme taken up by Gellner (1973:14) who referred to segmentation as ‘more honoured in the breach than the observance’. Though the current manifestation of the mosaic is disturbed by ‘bits of plastic and broken glass’ (his metaphorical description of modernity), close attention to the past, particularly the long Ottoman past, can provide a ‘background’ that was apparently ‘relatively constant and relatively homogenous’ (Coon 2011:8). Such models, while often acknowledging other times (especially the ‘pre-Islamic’ and ‘the Abbasid Golden Age’) are de-historicising in that they seek to write backwards to a recent (then within living memory) period of putative stasis; a procedure justified by Coon’s (*ibid.*:8) assertion that ‘a culture in transition is hard to describe and harder to understand’.

The concept of the mosaic gained widespread acceptance among scholars of the Middle East prior to the 1980s, reproduced in works by Albert Hourani and Richard

Antoun.¹⁰ Such grand orientating schemes were destabilised by the twin epistemological shifts of *Orientalism* (Said 1978) and *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Given the historical outline presented in the introduction, and given the re-appraisal of temporal schemes in anthropology following Fabian's (2014) critique of temporal othering, the basis for Coon's mosaic has come to seem not just politically problematic but naive.

In their recent edited volume *The Scandal of Continuity in Middle East Anthropology*, an exploration and celebration of the work of Paul Dresch through the research of his doctoral students,¹¹ Judith Scheele and Andrew Shryock state (2019:2):

The Middle East is a world of part-worlds, of polities and economies that are internally differentiated and arrayed in elaborate hierarchies of interdependence. It has long been so. This might be one of the reasons why the anthropology of the Middle East tends to feel marginal to a discipline that historically drew strength from its embeddedness in worlds that seemed coherent and freestanding.

Their co-authored introduction and their later chapters suggest in a theoretically sophisticated way something not so dissimilar to the mosaic. They also, it seems to me, demonstrate both the inadequacy of segments and mosaics as models, and also some important elements in these models worth salvaging.

Segmentary theory was for much of the 20th century a 'prestige area' in Middle Eastern studies, and as Abu-Lughod (1989) argues, a primary theoretical development coming out of work in the Arabic-speaking Middle East. Meeker could still describe segmentary theory as 'the lens with which more or less all anthropologists today perceive Middle Eastern tribal societies' (1979:11). This survived a deferral of the theory from the level of ethnographic reality to that of discourse or emic political idiom, so that, as the Lancasters (1987) argue, pragmatic political decisions are couched in terms of genealogical oppositions. Abu-Lughod explains the interest in segmentary theory as a response to the problem of maintaining order in acephalous societies, resulting in 'ordered anarchy' (1989:281). Much of this 'problem' disappears if another interpretation of the same settings is adopted, and at any rate putting aside the importance of a 'head' in European state theory, the existence of hierarchy, power and

¹⁰ Antoun was an American anthropologist of Lebanese descent who seems to have been the first ethnographer to focus specifically on a field site in Jordan.

¹¹ Dresch was a proponent of anthropological attention to large-scale patterns of spatial and temporal continuity, bringing Braudel's concept of the *longue durée* to greater prominence in the discipline.

entanglements with wider political economy in supposedly acephalous or tribal societies now seems banal and obvious.

The limitations of segmentation as a theory, among them a notable Orientalist a-historicity, now seem obvious. Anthropologists well into the late twentieth century wrote in the ethnographic present of a temporally stable, timeless world of Bedouin social life and unchanging genealogical reckonings that muffled all historicity. Genealogical thinking amongst segmentary-lineage societies produced a kind of ‘structural’ time which disposed of that which was no longer socially relevant, keeping the number of generations between the founding of a lineage and the present constant (Gell 1992), and so local ‘histories’ were only analysed in terms of their meaning in the present, and their temporal stability was never tested. Louise Sweet (1970), for instance, was one of many ethnographers who continued to write Bedouin monographs (in her case of the *Ain ad-Dayr* in Saudi Arabia) in the ethnographic present, even when many of the practices she described, such as camel raiding, and the *bisha’a* truth ordeal¹² were already vanishing, while the encroaching power of the Saudi state to compel taxes, land registration and religious orthodoxy goes largely without comment. Even more frequent is the telling habit of anthropologists in the region to claim that any discrepancy to their models (often extrapolated back to pre-Islamic Arabia) is not due to any failure of the model but due to recent ‘historical’ changes having obscured the ‘authentic’ version of the social form being described. There were also practical reasons for downplaying the importance of history; the obvious methodological difficulties of attempting Malinowskian fieldwork in the historical, literate and urban Levant and Iraq, coupled with the reluctance to contend with professional Arabists and historians with claims to specialist knowledge, served to confine anthropology to the imagined geographic and political margins of the region – tribes and nomadic pastoralists (Gilsenan 1990). Serious ethnographic engagements beyond the idea of segments and mosaics, often led by scholars with personal connections to the region only began to shake this focus in the later 20th century, and arguably only began to reclaim and re-analyse the supposedly tribal in the wake of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1998), upsetting some of the civilisational hierarchy and implicit denial of coeval-ness inherent within older works.

¹² Once widespread in Arabia, by placing their tongue on a special metal ladle heated in a fire an individual could prove the truth of their words. A *mubasha’a* – an interpreter of religious omens – would then assess the level of burning and scaring on the tongue to tell whether a lie had been spoken (Ginat 2009).

The influence of *Orientalism* as well as the intersecting crisis of representation within anthropology, has undeniably been generative of important work and correctives. In the case of the topic of this thesis, the work of Joseph Massad (2001) on the construction of tribes in Jordan under colonial rule and their reification by the Hashemites in attempts to forge a new national identity has been especially important. However, this argument around constructionism is not one I wish to reproduce. In post-Saidian Middle Eastern studies, attempts to study social forms (including tribes) often seem to conclude by rendering them social (usually colonial) constructs, as an end in itself. Any attempt to nevertheless explore their lived significance or the long pre-colonial history from which colonial constructors selected their materials has often been decried as an Orientalist reading of the Middle East. Much thought and practice did change under imperial and colonial rule, and it is both worthwhile and academically productive to critique the power relations and underpinnings behind much older Euro-American scholarship. Much of my ethnographic experience and historical reading supports Massad's central thesis in *Colonial Effects* (2001) – especially that certain cultural symbols and ways of being Bedouin have been conflated with a national culture opposed to that of Palestinians. Yet the broader collapse of history to a single rupture, an unknowable before and a colonial after following an encounter with 'modernity', does not offer a useful rubric for the ways in which historical continuity remains significant, indeed in some ways constituting the political economy of tribes in contemporary Jordan. The (partially intentional) decline of nomadism as an economic system under the Mandate may have led to an economically novel environment for many former herders now working for the army and the government, but pre-existing forms of social categorisation and political organisation have been adapted to this novel environment as well.

In addition to post-Orientalist and post-colonial critiques, there is little ethnographic imperative for thinking about my material in terms of segmentation. Oppositions are important, certainly, in the accounts of my interlocutors, especially oral-historical accounts. The popular Arabic aphorism taken as the definitive statement of segmentary principles of 'my bothers against my cousins, my brothers and cousins against the world' is contextually true, but favouring kin and networks of known entities is common to most people in most settings. The use of idioms of agnatic kinship to describe political relationships (fatherhood and brotherhood particularly) can hardly be seen as representative of a unique category of segmentary society (its use in celibate

Christian religious communities where filiation is even more metaphorical is one obvious example). In many ways, opposition to the state and to economic reforms characterised the key political project of being Bani Hamida for many of the young men I knew taking part in Hirak in Dhiban and Madaba, rather than opposition to another named group. Origins and historical narratives were important, and often privileged in explanations of contemporary politics (as seen in the example of the Arab Spring or the Nakba as points of division), but at other times attachment to place, or indeed to certain moral characteristics, such as hospitality or keeping *sharaf* (honour) seemed far more central than genealogy.

Yet even when not placed at the forefront of analysis, this problematic anthropological heritage overshadows work on societies once the subject of its theorising, a shadow only deepened when terms like tribe, Bedouin, feud and opposition are given an analytical afterlife. Though ‘MENA’¹³ as an ethnographic area has largely fallen out of mainstream discussions in political anthropology, and tribal social organisation in particular has ‘practically vanished as a topic of concern for scholars’ (as Scheele 2019a:n.p. puts it), a wider policy and developmental discourse on failed states, and threats from ungoverned spaces has brought a renewed focus in these fields to non-state political institutions, and especially to tribes, which often seem a synonym for lawlessness (see for instance Gonzáles 2009 for a discussion of various tribal (mis)readings of Iraq).

I have already suggested, following Scheele and Shryock (2019) that there remain important problems to be accounted for once segmentation is abandoned as a model. For one thing, as already hinted at, there is undeniably a long history to ideas of balanced opposition in Arabic thought, dating back to writings of Ibn Khaldun, a large (if often misread) influence on Orientalists, including Robertson Smith (1969), in turn influencing Evans-Pritchard’s (1940) formulation of segmentation. More significantly, the language of genealogy is one (but by no means the only) way of talking about socio-political relations; an explanatory device. As Scheele (2019a) argues, while Malinowskian mutualism (as described in *Crime and Customs in Savage Societies*, 1928) was premised on the inability of individuals to comprehend or give an abstract plan of the (bounded) socio-political system in which they operated as self-interested reciprocators, segmentary theorists often seem to describe their interlocutors giving them just such social abstractions, as I did in the form of the tree diagrams mentioned

¹³ Middle East and North Africa

above. The hushed and partially obscured alternatives to the genealogical models of dominant lineages are not usually disputing the broad thrust but rather relative position of elements within the system.

Such diagrams, which combine literate history with genealogical reckoning, conflate individuals with the lineages they supposedly founded, and personal relationships with structural ones. However, crucially, they are not the ‘history’ themselves, only at most a skeleton. They require narrative explanation and the motives of individual characters acting honourably, generously or despicably, making wise or stupid choices. The choices are made within a structure, but also have the potential to remake the structure itself, which is in one sense a representation of historical relations. The tree allowed my interlocutors to show me how parts related to each other, but not how these relationships came about, which at larger levels and further back, it is generally acknowledged, is not always through descent.¹⁴ Rather than descent predetermining the structure, as one reading of segmentary theory might have once suggested, it is used as a language to talk about often asymmetrical relationships of protection and coercion, of patronage; relationships that can and indeed perhaps must, exist in the shadow of other political forms, including cities, dynasties and states. The kernel of remaining interest in the segmentary model, then, turns upon ideas of protection and sovereignty, not blood.

The work of Paul Dresch is one of the most recent and sophisticated attempts to salvage something from notions of segmentation. Dresch defines segmentation as a process where ‘solidary groups form, and then combine and conflict, in predictable ways within a system sustained by a balance of power between its elements’ (Dresch, 1986:309).¹⁵ He, like Layne (1994) shortly afterwards, focused on Evans-Pritchard’s original relational definition – ‘relations between relations’. Crucially this did not necessitate solidary groups that would cohere at a specific level. Following this original sense from Evans-Pritchard, Brubaker and Cooper (2002:21-22) describe Evans-

¹⁴ Descent here is understood to be largely metaphorical outside of the *khamsat ad-dam* group (of those sharing a common agnatic ancestor within five generations) for vaguely important but genealogically indistinct relationships that are neither quite those of kin nor of shared subjects to a political order. Andrew Shryock (1997:45) describes the largest level categories, which he glosses as ‘confederation’, as ‘a nested hierarchy of allied but generally unrelated’ groups.

¹⁵ Layne quotes this as though Dresch’s opinion, however in the context of his source article, it is clearly not a position he would take, as he argues that segmentary systems (he spends some time dispensing with the connection to lineages entirely) are not predictable, but only provide the framework in which claims for legitimacy or attempts to bring about collective action, are made. For him there may be a case for the notion of segmentation but not for lineage or for calling it a theory.

Pritchard's segmentary account of the Nuer as a 'distinctively relational mode of identifications, self-understanding and social location, one that construes the social world in terms of the degree and quality of connection among people rather than in terms of categories, groups, or boundaries.' *The Nuer* (Evans-Pritchard 1940) remains the classic text for proponents of segmentation as an analytical model for supposedly acephalous societies, and yet, while focusing on this relational quality is valuable, it does not in itself explain the persistence of categories and names, which in the case of Arabia, perhaps more so than Nilotic Sudan, can be of extraordinarily long duration.

Dresch instead attempts an alternative genealogy for segmentation; to show that the original version, the 'Arabian tradition', emerging from Robertson Smith's reading of classical Arabic literature, did not contain the later associations with statelessness and kinship-based sociality that came to dominate the 'Africanist tradition'.¹⁶ The genealogy of this conceptual framework is thus placed not with the ethnographic engagements of structural functionalists, but Orientalist scholarly engagements with classical Arabic texts. While this orientalist origin presents its own set of representational problems and opens the theory up to other forms of critique, the key work it does for Dresch is bringing back history and politics. Rather than a social structure emerging from a timeless tribal order in interior Arabia, segmentation becomes a political and military environment that emerged out of the Arab conquests in the seventh century AD. Dresch suggests (1988:53);

If one were not an Arab tribesman – that is, if one had no place in this system, now organized in the idiom of descent – one got no pay; and as the conquests proceeded, so the "genealogies" formed a framework in which tribal groups (whatever these may have been to start with) became regiments in the garrisons of empire. This first segmentary, total genealogy, whose form was later to be taken as typical of certain "stateless" societies, was thus the product of a growing state.

While descent at all levels, and real known relatedness at smaller scales, is this central to this formation, it is not an explanation for the existence of the Arab 'tribe' in itself, as a socio-political form or as a claimed category. As a way of bounding a polity or

¹⁶ Dresch (1988:52) suggests that while for Appadurai and others segmentary theory came out of the work of anthropologists working in East Africa to influence anthropological accounts of Middle East, the New Guinea Highlands and other areas, in fact the order should be reversed. Dresch (1988:63) goes on to quote Evans-Pritchard's (1938:123) statement that 'it was reading Robertson Smith's writings that first made clear to me the kinship and of the Nilotic Nuer'.

political space of some sort, descent may be an important idea, but this in no way explains the polity's existence or its nature (see Crone 1993). Dresch elsewhere (for instance 1989) provides many historical examples to show that Arab tribes were not entirely predetermined by patrilineal descent, showing that the mass of people making up a tribe contained many non-agnates, and histories quite openly show individuals and groups moving between supposedly genealogical categories. People sometimes moved between these political spaces, but in doing so, genealogies could only be flexed so far, and traces remain for a long time. The normalised discourse may have mostly been descent based, but this does not adequately explain why these often large and historically stable categories have been significant in large parts of the Middle East for long periods of history, while elsewhere ideas of kin and relatedness have been just as important without the emergence of similar structures. As already discussed, Kabiliya 'the land of tribes' in Algeria seems not to have especially privileged large level descent categories, and yet was seen by urban rulers as 'tribal' for reasons of its political marginality and autonomy, a use of tribal borrowed to this Berber context from the Arabian exemplar. This leads Dresch to a rejection of kinship as the key definitional feature of tribalism in the Arabian genealogy of segmentation.¹⁷ Instead Dresch suggests that 'were one looking for a single attribute that characterized tribalism,' it would be 'moral reciprocity that turns on protection' (1990:255). For my argument the key here is protection, and through it, sovereignty.

Dresch (2009:1) considered the question of 'how names and categories are perpetuated through time' having dispensed with bottom-up models which see them as 'mere outward expression of common purpose' or as solely the organic outcome of kin relations, and instead focusing on the dimension of power and the inequality of relationships. Dresch used Wilkinson's (1987) idea of 'summation names' to account for the phenomenon of Arab 'tribes' where rather than the older idea of segmentary lineages, the focus is on categorical terms; names which are possessed, through genealogical claims, by only certain powerful men, while others are said only to 'belong' or 'follow' the name. Dresch's solution, found in several of his essays (1988, 2009, 2012) is to describe what he means by 'tribes' as a phenomenon of 'name/space'. It is the practice of asking for, accepting, contesting and moving between spaces of protection – also often of hospitality – that gives rise to the appearance of social

¹⁷ Cleaveland (2002) offers an example of the entirely political formation of the Walāta *qabīlah* from non-related people in the western Sahara.

organisation and to claims to group-ness. This recurs at various scales; the zone of protection of an influential family is in a sense a name/space, even though through contextual claims (for instance an attack or infringement from outside) that family is 'covered' by the name/space group of another with a wider claimed sphere of protection.

This language of protection could usefully, I argue, be termed sovereignty – it is not just a passive protection, but can constitute an active claim. To state that land, businesses or people are 'protected' by one is in a sense to claim sovereignty over them, the power to define, to set aside, to make exceptional. The sacred truce-spots around shrines and marketplaces in southern Arabia Dresch describes ultimately required protection from those strong enough to offer it to be constituted as such spaces. Such protection is based on properties of shared names with known reputations and characteristics, tied to claims to a particular space or spaces, both geographical but also genealogical and social. What appears at times to be shared categories of identification or solidary groups for collective action are in fact primarily made up of unequal, hierarchical relationships centred on a lineage or even an individual project of rulership. This presents a problem to classic segmentary theory; Dresch (1984:31) makes the point that 'in an autonomous system of "fission and fusion" there would be nothing for leaders to do except ornament political alignments... determined by the tribal structure rather than by them.' Dresch refuses to follow this prescriptive logic, showing how segmentary structures do not determine the course of events, allowing room for strategy.

The idealised model of segmentation tended towards an idea of equilibrium and temporal stability, in effect to resist not just leadership but history, at least in form if not in substance. As Dresch (1986:41) points out in Yemen, the boundaries of the high-level named social categories he studies, Hashid and Bakīl, have shifted surprisingly little for centuries, despite political conflict and population movements within and across these aggregations. These categories are apparently equal to each other, oriented serially, and defined by oppositions that work synchronically. It is not possible for a tribe or section to describe its own past from an internal perspective; its particularity can be defined only in balanced contrast to other tribes and sections. 'A great deal happens,' Dresch says, 'but little is conceived to change' (1989:179). Dresch's argument obscures who it is that is doing this conceiving. Clearly it is not the vast and under-examined mass of artisans, labourers (some of whom in Jordan would have been slaves) and religious

experts that Dresch places outside of Hashid and Bakīl and yet are vital to wider life within this setting.

While historical narratives of a similar sort exist in Jordan, and define a relational political structure in which events are intelligible to certain actors, the dynamics at work in Jordan are less prone to efface transformative change and both the scale and the nature of historical relationships are different. As Shryock (2019a:29) says;

In Jordan, the tribal system is oriented toward inequality and diachrony. It is replete with client and follower tribes... Groups like 'Adwan and 'Abbad are opposed to each other, but it would be hard to argue that they are morally or politically equivalent, and oral tradition is dedicated to proving their conflicting claims to distinction... In the Balqa, tribes are not defined simply by way of balanced opposition, like the white and black squares on a Saussurean chessboard.

Barth's (1959) largely discredited turn to game-theory to explain the alliance system of Swat would argue that the chessboard pattern of oppositions in North Yemen and other parts of Arabia is a logical outcome from any game of alliances between multiple actors, who will combine with their neighbour's neighbour against their neighbour, and as such be drawn into similar patterns. Such formations can occasionally be observed historically, in Jordan as elsewhere,¹⁸ but they rarely seem to have here over long durations. New structures, claims to association, control, and suzerainty emerge at different scales. Hierarchy (or perhaps sovereignty) rather than equality, and historical change rather than stability, are the key facets of this system of name/space. This, as Shryock (1997) makes clear, emerges from and generates a heroic historicity around the 'age of shaykhs' – a narrative genre and modality of history driven by the heroic actions of men, but also of lineages. Shaykhdom is often still described as an 'honour' or even 'ornament' to a family or name, suggestive of what Sahlins (1983) might choose to term

¹⁸ Examples include the binary divide within the Bani Sakhr, where, as mentioned, two broad factions, at-Twag and al-Ka'abnah, each with their rival paramount shaykhly lineages, encompassed all sorts of local conflicts. Historically and at a much larger scale, something similar can perhaps be observed in the broader Arabic pattern of rivalry between Qays and Yaman (and as suggested perhaps Guelphs and Ghibellines in Italy).

‘hierarchical solidarity’.¹⁹ However it is neither entirely a structural vehicle for individual glory (as Sahlins describes Fijian chiefhood, and Chadwick (1926) describes for ‘Heroic Age’ Western Europe), nor a structure whereby all acts and deeds are de-individualised through some sort of tribal solidarity. Nor were name/spaces merely ‘social projections of heroic ambition’, as Sahlins (1983:522) terms the Nguni Kingdoms; still less are they held together by Durkheimian solidarity. Where I find Sahlins useful here is in the idea of individuals and their heroic actions being able to represent and stand for larger structures, reproducing them but not always creating them initially. This is not always merely hierarchical and top-down: reputations made by the actions of individuals accrue to lineages at various scales – actions themselves informed by pre-existing reputations that must be lived up to or overturned. On such structural and conceptual foundations is built the project of representation and patronage that has come to dominate the modern conception of the *‘ashīrah*, thus long surviving the heroic modality of history discussed above. From earliest times, herders relied on specialists for dealing with external polities, in both commerce and war (often those capable of offering protection and hospitality), and though tied up with ideas of agnatic descent, which representative specialist is turned to has always in part relied on their success. The history Shryock describes, of shifting hegemonic lineages claiming paramountcy in the Balga is not only one of conquest and displacement by one tribe of another, but one of strategic realignments and the creative reinterpretation of genealogy for new alliances.

In this sense, the modern abandonment of traditional hereditary shaykhs for new holders of *wāstah* is nothing novel, and indeed need not be the end of the concept of the name/space. Concerns with name, lineage and tribe, and their associated honour and reputation, have always been backed up by concerns over land and patronage relationships which put pressure on people to choose their associations wisely and to demonstrate them vocally. This is what I mean by representative sovereignty, which though related to Sahlin’s ‘hierarchical solidarity’ and ‘heroic segmentation’ is a somewhat different social form. I therefore suggest a further analytical move, focusing on the role of shaykhs and key lineages as possessing a representational variety of

¹⁹ As with Chadwick’s notion of ‘an heroic age’ an elite vision of the social world informs a certain reading of history, which Sahlins, (1983:521-252) suggests creates ‘hierarchical solidarity’ – ‘old time students of social structure will appreciate the differences between the heroic modes of lineage formation and developmental processes of the classical segmentary lineage system. The segmentary lineage reproduces itself from the bottom upwards... however [heroic segmentary lineages] develop from the top of the system downwards, as an extension of domestic fission in the ruling family’.

limited and circumscribed sovereignty. Yet within this seemingly unstructured power play, certain continuities of form are still at work. The way sovereignty is claimed, expressed and enacted, the way it is imagined changing hands, and the categories through which claims to it are made, all go back a long time in the area now Jordan. Some elements of Dresch's formulation of segmentation seem useful here. In particular its focus on the way genealogy and relation can be used to make claims at different scales to protection and sovereignty, and its insistence on a relational social, contra to much recent ethnography of 'the state'. The 'segments' here are not neatly delineated unthinkingly cohering groups, but rather relational and relative entanglements of reputation and protection, that come about through a certain type of politics. This departs from Barth's transactionalist model of bottom-up generation, and from Renan's notion of 'daily plebiscite' (2009:6). Rather, history, power and relations to supposedly external states and empires, are inseparable from what anthropologists once glossed as 'tribes' in the Arabian context.

2.3 Infrastructures of Tribe: law, bureaucracy and the state

I have argued that the various identifiers associated with Bedouin and tribe in Jordan are in no sense 'natural' or 'organic' but contingent and emergent properties of historical processes, albeit in part very ancient ones. I have also argued that the socio-political environment of *'ashā'ir* is not best described via segmentary theory as conceived of by earlier scholars, but that this setting does partake of a mode of history and politics connected to but distinct from that of states. Returning to Dale Eickelman's (1989:127) definition of tribe in the Middle East as a concept with four dimensions, I turn now to Eickelman's second 'legal-bureaucratic' dimension to tribal terminology, as well as beginning to consider the third 'implicit conceptions of lived reality', looking at how official state-driven practices (re)produce conceptions of tribe and Bedouin. As well as considering the clientelist electoral and local politics of rural Jordan, I will outline how customary dispute resolution was codified and deployed by the British Mandate and later the Kingdom of Jordan in its legally-separate Bedouin hinterland, the *Bādīyah*.

By 'infrastructure', I follow anthropologists such as Penny Harvey (Harvey and Knox 2012) and Elyachar (2010) in utilising the term beyond transport, waste and energy systems, to refer to a wide variety of systems, structures and organising principles for sustaining and reproducing life, so ubiquitous as to be almost invisible. These are routinised settings or frameworks, in development contexts often considered

‘scaffolding’ for human and natural capacities, banal and often beneath the level of political discourse, but that deliberately encourage, enforce, and render visible and material certain activities and social forms, while obscuring, delegitimising and de-emphasising others.²⁰ I follow Elyachar (2010) in suggesting that these qualities of infrastructure, both as physical systems and as systems of classification, mean that it is a fertile ground for anthropology, and that social analysis should thus be a form of ‘infrastructural inversion’, drawing out and making explicit the unmarked and common-sensical systems that act as ‘scaffolding’.

At the widest level is the state’s metonymic use of the ‘house’ and the ‘tribe’, via the royal house/tribe of the Hashemites, to stand for the nation-state. Tribes and houses become implicated in efforts by the royal house to create something akin to a ‘state-revering culture’ to use Yael Navaro-Yashin’s (2002) term. This has been reinforced by the way development has been mediated via ideas of hospitality and patronage in Jordan. The monarchy in Jordan has generally sought to gain and exercise power over Bedouin elites via the same methods by which these elites constructed their own positions. In this way the idea of a ‘tribal authority’ runs downwards from the level of discourse and national symbolism into the legal-bureaucratic sphere.

Bedouin in Jordan hover between minority and core in the national imagination. So too in official practices they are inscribed into the state, but in a way reproducing difference.²¹ Official state-published lists of parliamentary deputies lists tribal name as well as party affiliation and place of origin, and positions such as ‘shaykh of the Bani Sakhr tribes’ under the official register of interests and offices. The areas that were historically considered *Bādīyah* under the Mandate are still represented in Parliament by nine special ‘Bedouin’ quota-seats, divided between three *Bādīyah* districts; north, central and south. Rather than being determined by residency the electorate for these nine seats consists of only those with specific last names, registered as ‘belonging’ to the Bedouin ‘*ashā’ir*’ of that list. Suffrage is now extended to women, and indeed one of each district’s three deputies must be a woman. The Bani Sakhr, defined exactly if sometimes disputedly by last-name and village, form the entire electorate for the central seat, guaranteeing them a Sukhur MP. In theory this means that Bani Sakhr people living elsewhere cannot vote or stand outside of this quota.

²⁰ By doing so, I do not necessarily accept the wider Marxist concept of ‘infrastructure’ nor the associations with a notion of dialectical materialism.

²¹ Mirroring in a more valorised way the treatment of other ‘minorities’ like the Christians and Circassians.

While Bedouin may hover between exemplarity and marginality, the political realities of tribe stretch far deeper into the body politic. Indeed, the idea that the '*ashīrah* (or equivalent) is a naturalised political community is reinforced at every level of the political system. Even when seeming to threaten the state, such discursive patterns are implicated in it. In the wake of the protests that I discuss in Chapter 6, a new policy was instituted to ensure that gendarmerie suppressing protests were not form the same '*ashīrah* as protesters. My protester-interlocutors saw this as an example of how the state feared the 'natural' sympathies and allegiances of rural Jordanians, who would not allow the state primacy over other social forces, but it also shows how the state institutionalises and naturalises such forces, dividing and ruling over various other potentially rival but co-opted foci for loyalty and power.

In electoral politics, patron-client relations abound at every scale, and are quite openly transactional at times, but always involve elements of respect and affinity. The weakness of political parties is often used to explain why most voters give votes to leaders who claim to represent them through shared membership of an '*ashīrah* or similar, yet such an outcome has been consistently encouraged by the state, which banned party lists for candidates from 1967 until 2016, and even now resists them, making funding, registering and joining them difficult (Baylouny 2008). Some urban areas are dominated by the Islamic Action Front, the parliamentary arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. But outside of this and a few other seats held by members of parties, parliamentarians are either independent or 'tribal'. These tribal candidates and the independents in fact overlap considerably and in any case rely on largely the same political model. Either gaining a reputation for *wāstah* or else making a deal with another who possesses it, the candidate, whether a wealthy patron or a shaykhly dynast, calls in favours and promises advantages to locals on local issues in return for support. Meanwhile the candidate often offers support to the Government on legislation, in exchange for his candidature being unmolested, ideally delivering his electors/clients the promised local favours (Clark 2018).

Since the 1980s there have been international and internal calls for decentralisation in Jordan, resulting in a series of reforms and local government elections and positions, culminating in widespread reforms in 2015. Such reforms, supposedly about delivering more 'democracy' and more localised policy, have been popular with neoliberal theorists and funders at the World Bank and IMF for decades (Harmes 2012). Yet in Jordan, local government seems mainly about offering further

opportunities for patrons to gain positions and titles, reproducing yet again an officialised version of the patron-client dynamic (Clark 2018). In many areas, the borders of newly created municipalities were drawn so that they would be dominated by a single '*ashīrah*, who sometimes give their name to the municipality, as the World Bank (1995), long lobbying and assisting with decentralisation reforms, admitted in its own report on the results of decentralisation in Jordan. In a later report, World Bank research showed funding was higher per capita among politically sensitive East-Banker rural municipalities than those with populations mostly of Palestinian origin, and was, they concluded, being channelled towards an established 'tribal' base of support for the royal house (World Bank 2005). Through making a municipality 'theirs', a shaykhly lineage or group of allied families control the office of mayor and council seats, as well as increased ability to provide services and employment to clients via *wāstah*. In the decentralisation legislation of 2015, local and municipal councils were given few real powers by central government, but have nevertheless become significant forces rather because of who sits on them. In rural areas, this is most often old men (and increasingly women) from shaykhly families, with a smattering of businessmen and local professionals (often, as we shall see in my central ethnographic case of Halima Abu-Qa'ida, people can be all these at once).

In the 2013 elections, following the king's proposed reforms in response to the 2012 so-called 'Arab Spring' protests, the Islamic Action Front boycotted the vote, leaving most candidates informally representing named '*ashīrah*, rather than political parties, often quite openly (Watkins 2014). This is nothing new. Shryock (1997:287) describes the then revolutionary and highly successful decision by Dr Ahmed Oweidi when standing for Parliament to adopt the name al-Abbadi, which he still uses, claiming to stand for all the 'Abbad *qabīlah* – consisting of tens if not hundreds of thousands of people in and around the capital. In doing so Dr Ahmed, whose own 'Uwāidi family have no history of leadership or renown within the 'Abbad, beat several shaykhs, who ran under their own proudly-held 'Abbad lineage names, gaining votes the shaykhs expected, due to their role as representatives of the group in dealings with the outside. Thus even when radical change occurs, it often takes place within, rather than challenging, the infrastructures of '*ashīrah*.

At a still smaller scale, as discussed, the state has infrastructurally reinforced the importance of descent and agnation in a time of reduced social welfare and economic uncertainty though the *ja'amāt 'aīlyah* ('family associations') (Baylouny 2006). Though

many families have always fallen back on support from kin and shared ownership among family members, the infrastructural existence of set ways of registering and legally constituting such practices contributes to a rising usage of idioms of kinship and blood within Jordan's political economy.

Such political representation and recognition, it might be argued, could merely be state realism in the face of a pervasive reality 'on the ground'. Yet a look at the more everyday politics of 'tribe' in Jordan, which often tends towards processes of dispute resolution, shows too the marks of state intervention, in reproducing and making use of infrastructural realities. A particularly significant example is the widely recognised and discussed category of '*awā'id*', or 'tribal law' (*qanun 'ashā'irīy*), as it is called in official accounts. My interlocutors would instead use the term *urf wa 'āda* 'custom and procedure', a category of practices distinct from but partially recognised by the Islamic *Shari'a* and state law systems. This more than almost anything else came up when asking questions around what '*ashīrah*' are; I was told that what defined them and made them different to other people was possessing codes of this type, and the nature of such arrangements were often a key topic of conversation during more formal interviews.

It is often in such legal practices that anthropologists too have found the purest expression of what they saw as segmentary logics, where cases of revenge and corporate honour activated different categories at different scales depending on the relation of the parties. Tribal law indeed seems like one area where something like segmentation is undeniable; where 'brothers against cousins, brothers and cousins against the rest' really does apply. Largely constituting a set of precedents around dispute resolution and arbitration, varying slightly from group to group, these practices are extremely common in modern Jordan and are widely said by Jordanians to be on the increase rather than declining. They continue to be key in mediating between the state and individuals. While for Massad (2001) this is a colonial effect, Jessica Watkins (2014) argues that 'tribal' patterns of dispute resolution were already and independently a force too powerful for the state to resist, leaving co-option and partial oversight as the only options for state-builders in Jordan. Watkins argues, however, that such practices cannot be seen as 'organic' or 'natural' as the role of the police and judiciary in facilitating, and indeed expanding the reach of, such processes to deal with social goals of stability are central to their function. For my argument, whether state actors and institutions are described as having constructed such systems or merely reproduced them in its own image is not of central importance; either way, the key point is their historical

contingency, and the way they too act as a subtle infrastructure, naturalising certain conceptions of the political and of sovereignty.

In some senses, this set of legal precedents and processes could be seen in the light of the classical colonial and twentieth century anthropological literature on ‘legal pluralism’ (see Merry 1988), existing as it does alongside various literate and urban based religious and secular systems of written law and interpretation. Certainly in many cases people have carefully and strategically decided which system to make use of (Barakat 2015). Yet unlike in the standard anthropological cases of ‘system-shopping’ analysed through legal pluralism, *‘awā’id*, just as much as the *Shari’a* and state decrees, has been a subject of the intervention of rulers, developing in close contact with urban states and power, long before colonial interventions.

Arab jurists have traditionally considered various local and precedent-based models of dispute resolution to be *urf* (‘custom’) rather than *‘adl*, justice, (despite the common term *‘adl Badawy*; ‘Bedouin justice’). This is a category jurists under Mamluk and Ottoman authorities generally regarded as at least partly legitimate in certain areas and for certain communities (Barakat 2015), yet since the earliest days of Islam the propensity for such systems to diverge from *Shari’a* has been a source of concern, to be suppressed where possible and to be reformed, codified and overseen where not (see for instance Shabana 2010, Dresch 2012). Proponents of such systems normally argue that the emphasis is placed not on absolute or retaliatory justice, but on social and communal harmony, through the payment of blood money, which aids the victim and allows relations to resume between the family of the victim and the perpetrator to resume. The defined goal of such processes is *sulh* (meaning a type of permanent, positive reconciliation), and the restoration of the *sharaf* of the wronged party, who say their honour or their ‘face’ (*wajah*) has been ‘blackened’ and must be ‘whitened’ though either blood split in revenge or through the paying of restitution and reconciliation.

In similar fashion to earlier literate legal authorities in urban areas throughout much of Islamic history, the British Mandate introduced a codified system of self-consciously ‘tribal’ law in the 1924 ‘Law for Tribal Courts’, which set down a basic framework within which dispute resolution would work, and as a mechanism to officially sanction competent judges for such cases (Oweidi 1982). Later the ‘Bedouin Control Laws of 1929’ were introduced, defining a separate legal and administrative system for ‘Bedouin’. These were defined according to a list of 13 officially recognised ‘tribes’; those who were or had previously been nomadic camel-herders in the *Bādīyah*,

and still lived seasonally east of what the British considered the frontier of the settled land, the Hijaz Railway.²² The aims of the laws were (cited in *ibid.*:273);

the control of the Bedouins and the superintendence of their movements; to determine, when requisite, the places in which it is deemed necessary for them to camp; to hear actions within jurisdiction of the tribal courts law and to give a final decision therein... To investigate raids and give out fines of up to £20 per person or 1 year imprisonment for infractions.

The Bedouin Control Laws contain many features which later became established parts of wider state-sanctioned tribal law. They determined the maximum amount of blood money for specific offences and gave the state the power to decide in cases where only one party was ‘tribal’ whether or not these laws applied. It blurred the restitutive and punitive aspects of law by allowing these tribal courts to administer criminal punishment to a set fine and up to one year in prison. The remainder of the population, including ‘tribal’ East-Bankers, were subject to the Ottoman Penal Code until 1951, and Personal Status Laws based upon *Shari’a* for civil matters (Fischbach 2000, Watkins 2014). These laws in a broader sense gave official existence and theoretically exact meaning to previously relational and flexibly defined concepts, such as a less-governed and marginal frontier zone of *Bādīyah* beyond the ‘sown’, as well as around who counts as ‘Bedouin’. Such moves were to have far reaching effects, outliving the law itself.

In 1976 tribal law was officially abolished by the king for complex motivations which are still disputed, but which likely included a desire to create a single national legal framework, increasing central power as actual nomadic potential to resist it waned, as well as to signal Jordan’s modernity to the outside world (Layne 1994). This particular form of limited frontier-zone tribal law was, as Watkins (2000:33) puts it ‘incrementally subsumed and then phased out by the state’. However, this was far from marking an end to government involvement in this type of dispute resolution, and in fact preceded its expansion.

Just three years before abolishing tribal law, the king had assembled a meeting of Shaykhs and judges from across the largest ‘*ashā’ir*’ covered under the Bedouin

²² In practice its inclusion of allies and ‘protected’ tribes, or those who were proving hard to control, while excluding others with as much clam to being ‘Bedouin’, meant its application was always somewhat flexible. The list (modified in legislation passed in 1933, 1938 and several times informally by decree) was determined by policy needs, controlling who should be subject to this separate ‘desert administration’, excluding a number of prominent *āsīl* (‘noble’ known origins) name-space categories on the grounds that they were insufficiently nomadic to be true Bedouin.

Control Laws (*majlis shuyyukh ashā'irīyah*) to discuss their future relationship with the royal house and to encourage further economic and social development and sedenterisation, presided over by the king's brother and Minister for Tribal Affairs, Muhammad Bin Ghazi (Massad 2001). They decided this needed to be widened and repurposed to include both *fallahīyn* and Bedouin. The decision had likely already been made to end the Bedouin Control Laws, and thus the legal distinction between Bedouin and *Hadhar* (settled) populations in Jordan, and yet at the same time a re-purposed and broader conception of 'tribal' heritage could be deployed as a nation-building tool, for a nationalism separate from that of Palestinians.

The assembled experts and shaykhs agreed a new national unified system of dispute resolution, the *Mahdar al-Qasr*, 'palace convention', an extra-legal and extra-constitutional move that angered many modernisers (Watkins 2014). It was a voluntarily-agreed codification, which the state would offer tacit recognition and indeed encouragement to in return for certain reforms of procedure, recognition of the primacy of civil law, and the limiting of such processes to cases considered to touch on *sharaf* ('honour'), under the three categories of *qātil*, 'ird and *taqta' al-wajah*; homicide, the violation of female 'honour' (normally through rape or illicit sexual activity), and 'cutting the face', cases involving the breaking of truces, which metaphorically 'cut' the shaykhs or family elders who made the truce and stood guarantee for it as 'faces'.

The convention agreed that where a matter touches on these categories of 'honour', and where both parties wish for dispute resolution to be carried out through *urf*, the state will allow this. However, where applicable, normal criminal and legal processes must run in parallel. This convention agreed the terms of a continued relationship between the court and lineage-based dispute resolution specialists, allowing for an official legitimisation of certain approved figures to act as judges, through issuing letters of endorsement (*musāsdaqā*) from the court, even while officially granting no 'legal' tatus to this system. In practice it is widely known that when a serious crime like a homicide is decided by the local governorate or police to be *'ashā'irīyah*, law enforcement will aid in making sure that supposedly traditional dispute resolution occurs alongside criminal prosecution, and judges reduce sentences considerably if it is understood that a 'tribal' solution has been found, further encouraging people to make use of this seemingly extra-legal system of law.

The state has continued to interfere, attempting in 1987 to limit mutual culpability from five generations of shared descent to two, and reducing blood money

(Watkins 2014). My interlocutors stressed that convention reforms have had little practical impact, though rather than following ‘timeless’ traditions, dispute resolution remains flexible. Beyond endorsed judges, informally *Islah* (known ‘reconcilers’) with a knowledge of *urf wa āda* continue to operate across the kingdom, including in supposedly non-‘tribal’ areas. Many are informally called *qādy*, ‘judge’, asked to resolve and arbitrate in a wider range of disputes than the above-mentioned officially recognised cases of *sharaf*, often keeping a *dīwān* for such purposes; a phenomenon I examine ethnographically in Chapter 4.

When it was known I was interested in such cases, a number of friends and interlocutors volunteered overviews of the process.²³ The general model is always given using the example of a ‘homicide’ case (including accidental manslaughter in road accidents), in part perhaps due to the convention, in part due to the seriousness of such situations making them the most fully worked-out.²⁴ The terms *qātil* – ‘killer’, and *maqtul* – ‘killed’, are used to describe the two sides in any dispute resolution, the victim and the perpetrator. The first step in such cases, once the police, the governorate and the parties involved agree the matter is to be subject to dispute resolution, or in some cases without any police involvement, is for the families to appoint representatives to urgently meet and begin the process. Firstly they must put in place the ‘*atwa amnīyah*, a ‘security truce’ to refrain from immediate revenge while the family of the *qātil* arranges to go into *jalwa*, a protective banishment or exile, which prevents them becoming a legitimate target of *thār*, ‘revenge’ which they would otherwise be.

This communal culpability is generally agreed to extend outwards from the individual to agnatic kin back to the shared paternal fifth grandfather, the *khamsat ad-dam*. In many cases this includes hundreds of people, many of whom have very little to do with the perpetrator, and as such will try to avoid inclusion, often by paying the victim’s family off. Others who are not closely related may involve themselves for socio-political reasons, so that this rule is never absolute. The general trend is for a shrinking of shared culpability, which as mentioned, the Government tries to enforce. There is a counter-tendency, however, for genealogically unspecific revenge to take place outside of these clear normative lines; sources of great concern for some older

²³ These included Dr Ahmed Oweidi himself, my Arabic teacher Samer, and Hamīd bin Lufān ash-Shammary, a man some called *qādy*, ‘judge’ for his frequent role in such cases, and a key ethnographic subject of Chapter 4.

²⁴ Descriptions of this basic model can be found in numerous ethnographic works (for instance Oweidi, 1989, Watkins 2014, Hughes 2018)

men invested in the current system. Such cases can spiral outwards into general violence and unrest at a national level, and thus state authorities take particular care in such cases. This is not then a matter of blind segmentary determinism, and whether the dispute stays at the level of *khamsat ad-dam* for both sides, or whether larger units get drawn in (up to the level of nationally known named groups like Bani Sakhr) largely depends on the identity of the victim and perpetrator, the political relations already existing between their families, and the strategies adopted by the negotiators. Specific decisions carry consequences: by not involving oneself in the disputes of those with which one is intimately connected, one risks cutting such ties and losing respect; it is said that someone who does not care about the honour of their family has a ‘cold face’ or ‘cold blood’. Dispute resolution cases are thus one of the main ways in which genealogy and the names of specific entities come up in local politics, as wider networks take sides in cases.

Once the level of the dispute is decided upon, shaykhs and heads of families will meet to choose a *qādy*, a judge to arbitrate the dispute. They will meet, often in the judge’s own *dīwān*, with each party also agreeing a *wajāh* (‘face’), who will act as a guarantor of good faith for both parties, and who will be financially responsible should the truce be broken. This man is considered to be a figure whose honour and impartiality is beyond reproach. Generally there follow a series of meetings with the judge to negotiate recompense, sometimes taking months or years, in which time the banishment of the perpetrator’s family continues. The judge, using precedent, will guide the two sides towards agreeing a level of compensation, normally financial (*diyyah*) which will be paid, as well as any other stipulations, such as the fate of the perpetrator who may be handed over to the police for criminal punishment separately, and length of the *jalwa*. The payment falls upon the whole *khamsat* in theory, though in practice more distant kin may refuse to pay. As even for a car accident, payments can be over 100,000 JD (£118000) culpability is a serious matter. Once an agreement is reached, ‘*atwa*, of a positive type, as peace rather than mere armistice, is declared. At this point, revenge becomes unsanctioned, and social relations can resume. Often further ‘*atwāt* (pl.) have to be agreed to prevent lingering animosities from boiling over. Eventually, at some point, it is hoped true *musalaha* – ‘reconciliation’ will exist between the parties, allowing normal social relations to resume. In many cases criminal justice will be sought alongside resolution, so that the individual will be punished by the state for their personal culpability, while the individual’s extended social role, which intersects with

others who share honour and responsibility to some degree, will be dealt with through this process. Watkins (2014) points out even the police have been known to get involved as disputants in such cases, paying blood money and agreeing to truces, despite a specific part of the Palace Convention agreeing that violence by the police or military in the course of their duties would not be subject to this system.

Not all Jordanians approve of tribal law. Massad was not the only intellectual to see such sentiments as the product of cynical manipulation by colonial and post-colonial regimes, and others, such as Marwan Muasher (mentioned in the last section as a critic of state-sponsored tribalism) see it as a tool for entrenching established clientelism. For many young urban Jordanians, especially those from Palestinian backgrounds, such things are anachronistic signs of a corrupt, unequal society which misdirects people from pursuing political and economic reform. As one student told me when I explained my intended research; ‘these things are the past, you shouldn’t study them. Study things that are useful’; I said I understood these things to be very important in Jordan’s politics. ‘Important’ she agreed. ‘They are important, but they do nothing to help the nation, they just cause *fitnah* [discord, chaos, civil war].’ Nevertheless, even people who are in a sense opposed to many elements of ‘*ashā’irīyah*’ use the channel of dispute resolution and the networks afforded them, because they can prove efficacious, resulting in lenience from police and judges, and because they often have few alternatives.²⁵

These infrastructural expressions of ‘*ashā’irīyah*’ and a separate ‘tribal’ sphere of social life show both signs of deep historical continuities as well as the repeated interventions of colonial and state actors, who have sought to control and make legible complicated relational models of sociality, law and crime. A private word over coffee or a visit to a shaykh’s *dīwān* can be an effective tool of policy, far cheaper than police and bureaucracy, and making overt resistance harder to crystallise. Equally, such a system offers at least the possibility of representation and mediation for those without personal wealth or political influence, allowing them to claim upon patrons to resolve disputes and to intervene on their behalf. To some, this offers hope for a better outcome than could be achieved by going before law courts or government officials as nothing but an individual subject; much better to be associated with a fierce category with entangled

²⁵ A friend of mine from an important Karaki family from the south who spoke often about how the shaykhs and the *qadā’ ashā’irī* (‘tribal judges’) further embedded corruption and a ‘bad political culture’ in Jordan grudgingly admitted that when he was dismissed from a job after a fight he only got reinstated when his employers found he had been ‘reconciled’ in this way with his combatant.

honour. The possibilities offered are perhaps, as Sneath (2007) suggests for various legal codes in Mongolia, not so dissimilar to those afforded by being in the retinue or household of a feudal noble – and thus under their protection. Yet the protection is not just that of the shaykh or patron. Names and their associations, as we have seen, are built and maintained through the actions of individuals, but survive and go beyond them. The world of nation-states exists now without officially-recognised marches, but these states can still contain other forms of sovereignty, encompassing but recognising them as in some ways marginal even though encompassed, thus permitting non-state, or as Scheele (2019a) calls them ‘state dislike’ spaces and institutions to survive.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to re-examine anthropological treatment of tribe as a concept, especially as it pertains to my regional focus. I have suggested that the problematic legacy of segmentary theory has obscured the analytical significance of ideas of protection and the entanglement of reputations and named categories. By looking at the way in which these structures are represented in the legal-bureaucratic realm, the electoral system, and the putatively tribal mode of dispute resolution, I suggest that we can discern the infrastructures that give a sense of reality and permanence to the categories previously interpreted as segmentary. Further, I suggest that these categories, following Dresch, are not and were not historically structures which predetermine events, but structures within which people act and strategise. In this minimal sense, segmentation is stripped down to structures of protection, relation and association loosely and variably binding people to names, no longer a ‘theory’ but also no longer perhaps so unworkable or so easy a target for demolition.

I have argued that the deployment of concepts around tribalism in public life has emerged through a set of historical circumstances whereby people and government have both relied upon a middle (*mutawasīt*) level of brokers and patrons, who framed their field of claimed sovereignty according to the logic (if not usually the reality) of agnatic kinship and genealogical categories. This, I have argued, rests upon partially mutual, though often contested, recognition of moral characteristics to do with honour, reputation and sovereignty attached to names, which entangle the reputations of individuals with those of wider categories. This entanglement of names and reputations in turn provides a field within which claims to leadership, and indeed sovereignty, albeit of a qualified and nested type, can be made. It is also a channel by which these

‘represented’ people, often discursively ‘tribespeople’ or ‘Bedouin’, but potentially anybody seeking *wāstah* make claims on these middle-men for aid and intercession. As a form of social organisation, this type of representative sovereignty has the ability to adapt and outlast specific events, accommodating and being accommodated by the new forms of the nation-state, bureaucratic government, and capitalism, all of which find ways of working through it.

States have often allied with populations living in spaces who seem less potential subjects and more, as Scheele (2019b:201) puts it, subjects of ‘pre-constituted socio-political groups’ with their own representatives whose allegiance must be won and maintained through a different logic to that of bureaucratically authoritative office-holder and public-subject (ideally instead that of personal connection) but one no-less asymmetrical for that. The appearance of pre-constitution (setting aside its doubtful historical reality) is an essential element of the representational strategy of shaykhs and more recently of the *wāstah*, who like Parry’s (2000) entrepreneurial brokers, have an interest in representing themselves as uniquely able to understand and work within an unchangeable ‘reality’ that resists outside efforts to render it legible. The sovereignty of such representatives is thus accepted as co-emergent with but differentiated from the state’s, although it may come to reinforce and reproduce the state in various ways, until people may see little point in distinguishing between them. This is at once particular to this ethnographic context, but also resonates more widely with anthropological theory at the intersection of values and ethics with the older traditionally Marxist topics of political economy. These meet in the dangerous and productive space of protection, the site of generosity but also predation; of commensality but also radical and profound asymmetry. I return to this in Chapter 4, where I consider ethnographically a type of this protective relationship; hospitality. Firstly though, in the next chapter, I will show how asymmetrical these relations can be, and how ideas of protection and of marginal spaces at the edges of state reach play out, in the sphere of land. Continuing with the idea of infrastructural realities reproducing conceptual ones, and of the historical contingency of both, I turn to land as a particularly clear and indeed foundational field of political economy.

3 SETTLING LAND, SETTLING PEOPLE; SEDEXTERISATION, SOCIAL CHANGE AND LAND SETTLEMENT IN THE MADABA REGION.

In the preceding chapter, I built on my historical outline of Jordan, and the place of ideas of tribes and Bedouin within it, to suggest the dynamics by which a tribal political world of protection and honour is historically reproduced in contemporary Jordan, beginning to account for how and why ideas of possessing a name and an association with a protected space of partial and differentiated sovereignty retain significance in everyday politics and social identification. In this chapter, I will focus specifically on how ideas of protected spaces and differentiated sovereignty, but also of growing containment and encompassment of such spaces within the nation-state, have emerged and been reproduced in my area of study at the more grounded level of land and land owning. Here I will explore how past local histories of land registration and settlement, and present differences in land value, underlie differences between people and places in Jordan, and are essential for understanding the bundle of socio-political associations which make *'ashā'ir* as name/space categories distinct from one another. Land is also, as I will show, an arena where feelings of profound dislocation and rupture are articulated.

These associations, and the dislocations emerging out of the creation and transformation of the land market, have imbued different groups of people with different positions in relation to the nation-state, with varying abilities to capitalise on land. Jordan, like most nation-states, has sought to reform society through reforming land. The concept of what land *is* and how it should be used is still evolving in Jordan. Land has been central to both state-making and efforts to unsettle and resist the state;

from the usufructuary and late-Ottoman system where land had little value, as it was plentiful and being tied to the earth was a vulnerability, through the period of British colonial domination (1921-1956) where the largest intervention was the imposition of a 'rationalised' system of land settlement, to the rise in more recent periods of speculation and urban growth, and concomitant concerns over misuse, degradation, and amoral practice. Here as elsewhere in the region, land and property regimes took on special significance in modernisation theory as powerful representations and conceptual indicators dividing law from custom, individuals from the collective, modernity from pre-modern, state from non/pre-state. The economist Hernando De Soto (2000:7) frames the problem of development in the 'Global South' as one of property).¹;

they have houses but not titles, crops but not deeds, businesses but not statutes of incorporation. It is the unavailability of these essential representations that explains why [they have not] been able to produce sufficient capital to make their domestic capitalism work.

Evangelists of free market development argue that full incorporation and participation within the global economy depends on turning land into individual and alienable productive capital. This incorporation rests upon pragmatic decision-making, rather than complex social concerns surrounding land use. I argue that land relations in rural Jordan problematise this fable of neoliberalism, raising the possibility that the sort of incorporation De Soto sees as essential for development is precisely what people are trying to avoid when they refuse to fully accept a single, coherent logic of private ownership and land tenure. In short, commodification of land has occurred in Jordan because, not in spite, of legal and paralegal ambiguities.

To make this argument I return to deep history. James Scott (2010:29) suggests parallels between his conception of *Zomia* (borrowing Schendel's term for a putative socio-cultural region across upland South East Asia) and certain readings of the history of Middle Eastern nomads.² In both cases the current positionality of a recognised 'minority' is built upon a local political history characterised by marginality and antipathy regarding urban-based tributary states. In the Scottian view we might see pastoralism as purely a technique to avoid 'being governed', one rendered decreasingly

¹ The titular 'mystery' in De Soto's (2000) book, *The Mystery of Capital: why capitalism triumphs in the West and fails elsewhere*, seems unmysterious for many anthropologists working in places where local exploitative conditions seem to be integral components of the West's 'triumph'.

² Scott (2010:29) connects *Zomia* to Gellner's idea of 'marginal tribalism' as a 'political stance', as discussed in Chapter 2.

effective by the new technologies of the telegraph, motorcar, aeroplane and modern weaponry, and being outcompeted by new modes of production and new types of consumer goods in the last century, and turning oscillation between desert and sown into ‘one-way traffic’ (Scott 2010:31). However, this has not been the whole story in Jordan. As we have seen, ideas of protected if encompassed political forms associated with name/spaces have survived technological and economic changes. I instead focus on the long, deep interconnections between *dawla* (‘state’) and *Badu* and how both formed in dialogue with each other. At the centre of this dialogue is the question of who owns the land, and who gets to use it. Judith Scheele (2019b) in her discussion of the anthropological literature dividing the *Bildad al-Makhzan* (land of the money box – urban, tribute-imposing polities) and the *Bilad-as-Siba* (centre-less lands of small loosely encompassed polities) in the Maghreb points out that relationships between them were always intense and intimate, rather than being beyond each other’s reach as separate bounded societies or ontological realities. In Jordan too the *Bādīyah* was marginal but within the world of states: urban markets, Ottoman governors and decrees from the sultan all feature in Bedouin historical narratives. In both cases, entanglement occurs through figures who mediate between both settings, strategically deploying and combining techniques and practices from both, and in doing so are able to play a political role, often one of leadership. As such, I seek to abandon the implicit ‘bottom-up-ness’ of group-determination found in Scott’s description of identity formation in the *Zomia*, focusing instead on the relations of power and sovereignty that underlie any category of solidarity.³

3.1 Land and Moral Economy: the Fayiz inheritance

Much of this chapter moves between the ethnographic and the historical, both the broad history already introduced, and the specific and history of Jordan’s land regime. This is because, when I came across talk of land ethnographically, it was often used to make comparisons with the past, express a widespread sense of dislocation and rupture from it in the present, and articulate worries about the future. In particular, many Bedouin

³ The question of who it is who decides ‘not to be governed’ is an important one that Scott doesn’t satisfactorily answer, though he hints that it may not always be quite so bottom-up and organic as in the theoretical model he suggests. Like the English Barons resisting Monarchical authority through Magna Carta, talk of freedom from states need not be incongruent with other forms of hierarchy and the operation of power over subjects at other (smaller) scales.

reliant on selling land (or as we shall see, claims to land) to outsiders feared the long term consequences of development and speculation. Desires to create a protected, politically and social differentiated tribal and Bedouin space, of the sort discussed in the last chapter, are often in tension with the necessities of living and socially reproducing. I contend that various discourses around land in Jordan partake of moral as well as political economy, mediating the relationship between people and the state, land and the market economy. As I will discuss, here and in more detail in Chapter 5, anxieties about social reproduction, feckless consumption, and a changing political economy where the state is no longer so beholden to East-Banker tribesmen in remote villages, articulate an idea of a moral economy in rupture. A morally superior past order, where land was socially situated, often communal, and where social goods superseded purely personal financial ones (though the two were often one and the same) is felt to have fallen apart. The historical reality behind this is, as we shall see, complicated, but nonetheless, many Jordanians are finding a discourse of a moral economy resonant.

By this I do not mean a unified or single agreed code of economic morality that is ‘Jordanian’. Rather, following EP Thompson,⁴ and Fassin’s (2009) and Edelman’s (2012) anthropological adoption of his ideas, I consider how different actors legitimise protest and frame dissatisfaction through referencing social norms, obligations, and redistributive contracts portrayed as ruptured, broken down or frustrated by an *amoral* elite. I thus use the term ‘moral economy’ to refer to the way various discourses on the economy and on the role of the state, and certain dispositions towards economic dilemmas that I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5 as ‘images of the good’, inform one another.⁵

In the face of mass-migration, and as Jordan’s paternalistic economy is subjected to reform, the moral dimension of economic critique becomes heightened.

⁴ I am thinking particularly of Thompson’s (1963:68) description of rioting ‘legitimized by assumptions of an older moral economy, which taught the immorality of...profiteering from the necessities of the people’ – assumptions he later described (197:136) as ‘a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, if the proper functions of various parties within the community’. The use of ‘assumptions’ here, rather than, for instance, ‘historical memory’ is crucial. The Jordanian past of generous shaykhs and interaction and exchange between known and mutually respecting and honourable subjects must be taken in the same light.

⁵ As Edelman has suggested, Thompson seems to have had two interrelated meanings of ‘moral’ in moral economy in mind, at least by his later ‘revisit’ (Thompson 1991). Firstly and most obviously as ‘mores’, customary and normative values, historically contingent and embedded within a social context, and secondly a more future-orientated, even utopian ‘principled stance vis-à-vis society, the world, and especially the common good’ (Edelman 2012:55). These two meanings, of both a contingent custom and an image of the good, seem very much present when Jordanians talk of social contracts and broken bargains.

Jordan's stability is premised on ideas of equitable land distribution and social contract, but this contract, 'written' in a world of tribes and pastoralists is increasingly presented as fraying (Tell 2013) in a nation of 10 million overwhelmingly urban subjects,⁶ a majority of whom are from other places, driven to Jordan by war and instability.⁷ Disgruntled descendants of Jordan's pre-1948 population, the so-called *awalad al-bilad* (sons of the land) or 'East-Bankers' still include major landowners, especially in rural areas, but many are also now landless.

Talk of contracts broken extends beyond those struggling with economic precarity, like graduates in Dhiban, to former-elites under pressure from economic reforms (such as income tax changes) who use talk of broken deals and a fairer past to build potential broad solidarities. Within nationalist Jordanian opposition politics two assumptions have come to the fore: a tribal past with land held for the common good of co-members of name/space categories and a social contract between the Hashemite regime and the tribes. The vision of the moral economy here is not egalitarian; it looks back to a past of customary law portrayed as just or fair, but relying on a claim to legitimacy involving notions of social role and mutual obligation – a hierarchical world of clear duties and obligations. To recast this as a blueprint for an egalitarian future where the means of production are redistributed is a move in tension with its own foundations.

Certain figures have been particularly adept at handling this tension, and making use of such a discourse of moral economy. A pertinent example is that of Hind al-Fayiz. When I interviewed the opposition politician and former parliamentary representative of the Bani Sakhr's constituency (the central *Bādīyah*), she quoted (in English) the popular aphorism 'to the king the Bedouin are a blanket; when he is cold, he pulls us close; when he gets hot, he casts us away'. The aphorism reflects the notion that Bedouin have been cast as loyal supporters of the king (especially in moments of crisis like Black September), and as a reservoir of tradition from which to build a national culture, but the king has not rewarded this loyalty, as state employment and subsidies on which they rely economically have declined. This sentiment, she said, was why she was able to draw upon broad support in Bedouin areas.

⁶ According to the Jordanian Department of Statistics (2019).

⁷ Palestinians in 1948, 1967 and the 1970s, Iraqis in 1991 and 2006, and recently around 1.8 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR 2016:4).

Hind's mighty family, the paramount shaykhs of the Bani Sakhr, benefited greatly under Hashemite rule, claiming huge tracts of arid land for development in return for political support. Hind's own position is a complicated one, as despite her own opposition politics and close association with leading figures in the Hirak protest movements, she owes some of her political capital to her place in one of Jordan's most prominent shaykhly lineages. Her father Hakim was a grandson of Mithqal al-Fayiz, the paramount Sukhur shaykh during the Mandate period and a key 'tribal' ally of Amir Abdullah. Hakim, as the son of Mithqal's eldest son, was regarded by many as his political heir, and inherited large areas of land and several houses in the Fayiz village of Um al-'Amad (described in the next chapter). However Hakim was himself a committed Arab nationalist and Ba'ath party member in Syria, and as such a prominent critic of British imperialism and, by extension, the Hashemite house. He fell into disfavour with President Hafez al-Assad and spent twenty-three years as a political prisoner in Damascus, including for most of Hind's childhood. During this time his inherited lands were managed by the wider family, and Akif, a younger son of Mithqal, came to dominate family business (although without the title of paramount shaykh). Hind told me that at one point the Syrian Government had offered to repatriate Hakim to Jordan, but she said, Akif, Faisal and their network, well-placed in government, pushed King Hussein to refuse, concerned that if their cousin returned, long-settled questions of inheritance and leadership within the Sukhur, and of land ownership, would be reopened.

When Hakim returned, he remained a left-leaning critic of the Government and of his family, and though he tried to stand for parliament in 2003 as a Ba'athist, he was blocked by the court; on the grounds that as a Bedouin and a Sukhur he could only stand for election in the central *Bādīyah*, whose electorate is defined by possessing a Sukhur name. Hind herself, who continues elements of her father's activism, also sought to stand as an independent radical in an open seat in the capital, but yet again was forced instead to stand for her own Bani Sakhr Bedouin seat, which includes a quota for women. As discussed later in the next chapter, Hind sees the Bedouin quota seats as degrading and problematic, rather than as evidence of influence and patronage, as do some other Bani Sakhr with whom I spoke. Hind herself is critical of her wider family and its past of violent predatory land acquisitions. However, it is telling that despite her profound political differences, her al-Fayiz relatives and other figures of influence in the wider Sukhur did come out to support her election in 2013 – presumably prioritising

blood, or rather a name, over politics. While thus in some ways resisting the ideas of protected sovereignty and Bedouin political identity on which her family's position rests, she told me it was this historical position that allowed her to speak out:

I have the right, I have the legacy... I told the crowd at Karak in 2016 "the king has not bought us as slaves. We took in his family so they could settle disputes between us, not sell the country from under us. They came not with a sword in their hands but seeking protection".

The Hashemite house here are cast as guests who have usurped their hosts; a classic trope of Bedouin narratives of power changes following the political logic of hospitality described by Andrew Shryock (2019b). The use of 'us' in this context, though, is significant, invoking solidarity across all East-Banker tribes, including those in Karak. In other contexts, talk of 'us' might apply only to those who directly benefited from this unwritten contract – like Hind's own family. The 'us' who make alliances with the state and the king through interpersonal association rather than law or Bureaucratic process, and who expect access to the core of the body politic, is defined by lineage, personal connection, wealth and power. It extends outwards in theory but not always in practice via acts of patronage and representation to Bedouin households living off small pensions, government salaries or land sales in small concrete houses in remote villages. I argue that it is not the existence of such elites that is an innovation or 'perversion' of the old egalitarian solidarity of *Badu* 'ashā'ir, but rather the idea of undifferentiated communality. Yet a dislocation in the field of moral economy remains an important discourse, more than a hegemonic manipulation by elites, articulated thorough differences in land ownership.

3.2 Historicising the Land System

Before returning to the nature of this dislocation it is necessary to explain some of the historical and legal background to Jordanians' relationship to land and land ownership. This is for three main reasons.

Firstly, this is because this history reveals much of the nature of contemporary political economy in my field site, and shows in particular how the various associations and practices of name/space categories, Bedouin identity, patronage and representative sovereignty are reproduced. We see in land the successive marks of imperial and post-colonial reforms, seeking to create, control, render legible and finally to 'liberalise' and

marketise, land-as-property; in each case though compromising in the face of local political realities, when faced with the marginal gains from complete penetration of marginal places. We can see here the limitations of such interventions and processes, as the older dynamics they in part transform nevertheless adapt and work through them, including notions of name/space protection and representative sovereignty built on techniques of interpersonal association. In fact, as already implied in the reference to De Soto, it is often through such processes of repurposing and creative ambiguity that such interventions take place, and succeed in their aims as far as they do.

Secondly, because long-term relations to land are essential to understanding the historical contingencies reproducing name/space categories in contemporary Jordan, and thus also their positionality in the nation-state. The socio-political and economic power of the *ashīrah* of al-Fayiz rests not on age-old tribal loyalties pre-determined by kinship and segmentation, but rather emerges from specific circumstances, whereby the shaykhly lineage of al-Fayiz used their position as intermediaries with the Ottoman authorities (over matters such as the Hajj escort) to convert their reputation into land holdings, firstly through registering large personal estates, then through claiming Sukhur grazing land as personal property. As implied, land prices and socio-political reputations in the present rest on historical contingencies to do with where nomads grazed long before the existence of the capital city of Amman, as well as with the settlement policies of successive imperial governments, and the acquisitiveness of past shaykhs. This is a theme that I return to in Chapter 6, when considering why it is that youths form some names and places, such as the Hamaydah in Dhiban and Jabal Bani Hamida, often take part in radical anti-regime political protests, while others, such as the Sukhur in Madaba and the surrounding villages, do not, instead demonstrating over supposed matters of ‘honour’ and in fact often in strategic ways that seek to ensure continued state patronage. Interviewing Muhamad Abu Salih, an important sheep- and wool-trader in the poor and remote Jabal Bani Hamida, who is staunchly pro-monarchy and opposed to HIRAK, I asked why the youth in Dhiban protest unlike the Sukhur in nearby towns. He explained that the key was land. The Sukhur land across Wadi Haydan was worth three-times as much as his own family’s land. Fayiz land in Um al-

‘Amad and around the Airport is worth 15,000 dinars per dunum.⁸ In Jabal Bani Hamida un-irrigated pastureland is worth 3-4,000 per dunum. Agriculturally he told me the Jabal was better, with richer pasture and more natural water. Distance to Amman, development and most intangibly reputation accounted for this difference. This he suggested is why Bani Sakhr landowners remained largely behind or neutral towards the Government, as land sales shielded them from the impoverishing economic reforms felt by the Hamaydah and others. Their reputation and close association with power also aided them in land disputes. In this way, both ideas of historical continuity around long-term reputation, and specific historical events, are essential to understanding current relations to land, and therefore the material underpinnings of name/space associations, which while always adaptable to historical contingencies, largely turn on the idea of protection, and especially the protection by and for those sharing a name of the means of production.

Thirdly and relatedly, it is through land that we see that the ‘Bedouin Villages’ of Madaba are, like al-Fayiz paramountcy, not timeless, naturalised social facts, and nor, contra Scott, can they be seen as emerging entirely through processes of state refusal and the egalitarian autonomy of nomads – in short, through bottom-up processes. Rather this setting, as exemplified in al-Fayiz ownership of vast land holdings, is one whose construction bears the mark of power, inequality and hierarchy; that of imperial and national rulers, and that of their local intermediaries who have grown up around the margins.

During the Ottoman period, the area now Jordan was a loosely incorporated frontier region, parts of which were nominally within Ottoman provinces. The few urban centres and settled communities of cultivators, often living in tents seasonally, were often obliged to pay *khuwa* (tribute or protection money) to locally dominant Bedouin polities (often in kind as grains) to ensure their safety. Settled registered villages were subject to occasional Ottoman tax collection expeditions. This double-exploitation of the peasantry discouraged registration, permanent settlement and cultivation, so that even many cultivators lived in tents rather than permanent villages to avoid tax collectors, and many others seem at least in part relied on the greater mobility

⁸ The *dunum* is an ancient Turko-Byzantine measure of surface area retained from the Ottoman period, corresponding to roughly one quarter of an acre. This measure is used in all official sources, although colloquially for much of the last two centuries people in the region have favoured the *feddan* as a measure for agricultural land – traditionally a non-surface area measure corresponding to the land that a single ox team could plough in a day (the term *feddan* means ‘ox yoke’ in classical Arabic).

and protectability of flocks (Rogan 2002). It seems that this time saw a general increase in the importance of '*ashīrah*' categories of name/space in peoples' lives, as the need for protection and mediation in the face of raiders (whether Bedouin or tax-farmers bearing Ottoman licenses) became greater.

This area had a series of overlapping, competing conceptions of land, in which various claims and obligations could be made for usage, rather than absolute ownership. Most cultivated land, (in Ottoman legal theory, owned by the sultan who allowed it to be cultivated in return for taxes) was managed communally through a system of shares called *musha'*, whereby instead of households owning specific plots of land, they owned a number of shares (Fischbach 2000). Shaykhs and the heads of leading families would divide up all the land around a village by shares and allocate temporary plots to shareholders, rotating them every few years. As well as shareholders many people worked as *murabaiyin* 'quarter-ers' – labourers paid with a quarter of what they harvested (Abu Jaber 1989:74).

Beyond the zone of cultivation, nomadic pastoralists continued the concept of *dira*, had which any member could use for grazing, but which outsiders could only use with permission. This concept of territoriality is temporal as well as geographic (Lancaster and Lancaster 1986, 1990); *dira* is also a zone of permitted movement, through which pastoralists and their flocks move with the seasons and with rainfall responding to economic and ecological circumstances.⁹ Generally, small herds of a few dozen animals were permitted to use another's *dira* even without formal permission, and armed groups from very strong categories, such as the Rwala and the Bani Sakhr grazed the lands of others by force. Wells and springs, more important than land itself, were more closely controlled and associated with the shaykhly lineages, as guardians, builders and maintainers of wells. Under the *Hima* system land was carefully managed, normally at the level of the *khamsah* (those with a common agnate within five generations, sharing cohabitability in matters of honour and disputes), with acknowledged ways of setting land aside as a reserve for drought or to allow recovery (Shoup 1990).

From the mid-nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire undertook military expansion and formalisation of rule in these borderlands as part of the empire-wide

⁹ Different groups had a customary or acknowledged claim to use grazing lands at different times of year. For instance, the lands south of Madaba, towards the village of Ma'in, were originally grazed by Sukhur in the summer months when they came west from the Eastern Desert and in the winter various Balgawiya *ashā'ir*, like the Shuwabkah and the Ajarmah, who in turn went north or into the Ghor for the summer months.

Tanzimāt. Reforming land was central, introducing land registration and a unified empire-wide land code (Deringil 1998, Rogan 2002). The land laws of 1858 were applied to Jordan by expansionary governors in Damascus in the 1860s-1880s, attempting to regularise the existing Ottoman Turkish legal categories for different types of ownership and usufructuary rights with local practices.¹⁰ The majority of cultivated land was theoretically *miri*, where final absolute ownership (*ruqa'a* – 'the neck') rested with the sultan, but where inheritable usufructuary rights to cultivation were gained by enclosing and farming the land, paying tax and a fee for *tapu* – registration (Fischbach 2000). Unregistered and uncultivated land, such as steppe and desert, but also agricultural land that had fallen out of use was considered *mawat* ('dead'), but could be claimed as *miri* if enclosed, irrigated for two years and registered. Most of modern Jordan and almost all the Bedouin land fell into this category. If land was no longer cultivated, the registration was voided. To encourage registration Ottoman governors awarded some unregistered Bedouin land near to ancient, ruined cities (to serve as building material) in the Balga to settler-cultivators; Circassians at Amman and Christians at Madaba, resettled as a town for the first time in a millennium.

The late nineteenth century saw a general expansion of cultivation in the Balga, with intensification of cereal cultivation, large-scale ploughing and a return to wheeled transport for bulk goods, coupled with military suppression of various bedouin rebellions. This period is still referred to by some as *fataha al-ard* the 'opening of the land' (Abu Jaber 1989). The old town of Salt expanded with new Nabulsi investment and with a thriving business selling ash (collected by Bedouin in the desert) for the soap industry, gained Ottoman protection, ceased paying *khuwa* to the Bani Sakhr and threw out their Bedouin shaykhly overlords from the 'Adwan from the castle (*ibid.*). The Abu Jaber family of Salt were especially active in the Madaba region, establishing the large Yadudah estate. By agreement with successive al-Fayiz shaykhs they came to farm or provide manpower for much of the cultivatable land within the Sukhur *dira*. The Sukhur rightly feared that if they did not cultivate land they would lose it to those who would and so began to register land themselves, especially Fandi and his son Sattam, the nominal paramount shaykhs, but soon followed by many other Bedouin in the area. With external credit and new techniques, they established a series of large estates,

¹⁰ The 1858 Land Code, once seen as the beginning of 'modernity' in Greater Syria was more a recognition of pre-existing developments than a radical reform, recent historians have argued, and in fact 'neither contradicted co-ownership nor required its dissolution' (Firestone, 1990:106).

farmed by slaves and migrant labourers; the origin of many of the Bedouin villages. This period is remembered as the time when the Bedouin villages and current land division began, as *khirbāt* (tell sites and ruined late-antique cores) were registered and resettled as the nuclei of new agricultural settlements. For instance, Marwan, my young Mutirāt interlocutor from the university of Jordan, told me of the case of his ancestor Muhammad Abu Faris of the Mutirāt, who in compensation for the loss of land he claimed around Madaba to the Christians, was given permission by Sattam al-Fayiz to claim a *khirbah* on which to build a new agricultural ‘village’ at Dulaīlat, which became known as Dulaīlat Mutirāt, still the centre of that ‘*ashīrah*. This time saw the expansion also of the *musha*’ system into areas where it had not been used previously, sometimes formally, but more often informally, as new cultivators looked for local social precedents to share resources.

Abu Jaber (1989:82) summarises the situation in this dynamic period of agricultural expansion: ‘generally a claim was announced by a shaykh either for himself or his tribe, to a *khirbah* or large area of cultivatable land, and if uncontested by any stronger shaykh or tribe the acquisition became final [through registering with the Turks]’. Sattam al-Fayiz famously rode up to nineteen *khirbāt* in the area east of Madaba and claimed them as his by firing a shot into the air; still sometimes called ‘the bullet villages’. This land had previously been rangeland used by his ‘fellow’ Bani Sakhr. Displays of force were generally combined with willingness to use official and customary forms of legal discourse. Clearly the conceptual value of land, and crucially of registering it, had risen. The environment had changed from one where herds and those who controlled them had the advantage (imposing *khuwa* payments on villagers and avoiding payments to others, through threat of force or by moving away) to one where even the strongest noble camel-herding *Badu* in the area were at first investing and later taking part in cereal agriculture.

The establishment of the British Mandate over Trans Jordan led to even greater changes. Land reform was to be the largest colonial intervention, taking the Mandate ‘into literally every village’ (Fischbach, 2000:2), and together with the Arab Legion and the Bedouin Control Laws it was part of a central raft of policies aimed at expanding cultivation and settling (using the British colonial meaning of sedenterising and pacifying) Jordan’s Bedouin. There is considerable literature looking at the colonial concern with land, especially in the Arab World, starting with Algeria. Gilsenan (1982) follows Bourdieu in arguing for the aesthetics of land domination, which sought

‘rationality, linearity, order, visibility, uniformity.’ The French in Algeria remain the exemplars, Marshall Bugead famously ordered his administrators to ‘bit by bit, get them to use our money’ especially in land sales (Gallois 2017:1). It seems that in Jordan the British believed that communal land holdings (to varying degrees both *musha*’ and *dira*) disincentivised investment, improvement and production increases, and allowed shaykhs and notables too much power as custodians and arbiters of land disputes (Peake 1928, Glubb 1932).

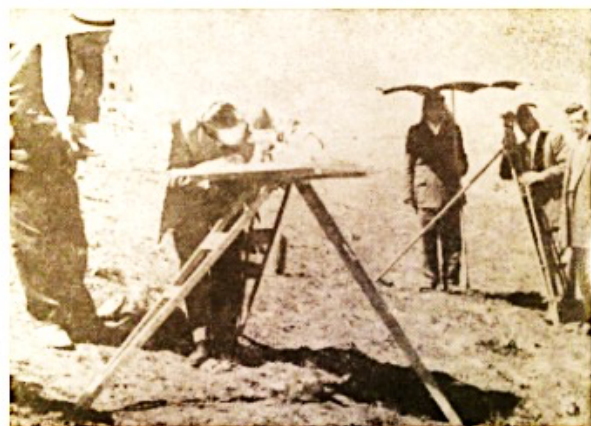
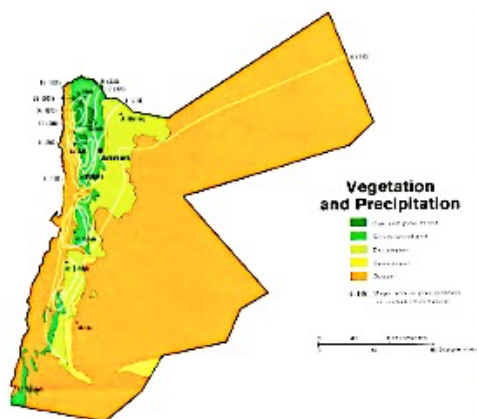
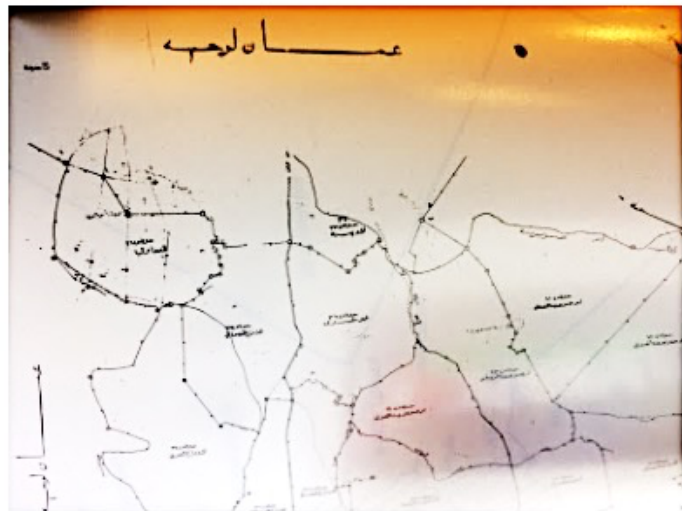
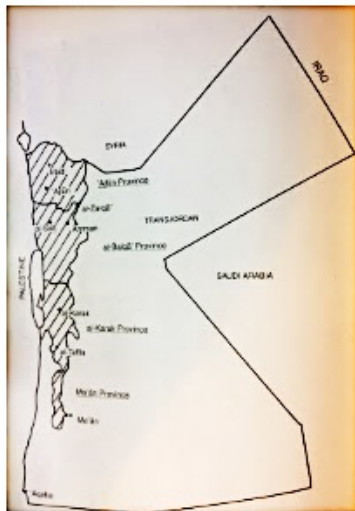
Fischbach states that the British applied to land ‘two fundamental assumptions’. The first was that all land was owned by someone, the second that land should be managed efficiently to maximise its productive potential (2000:79). A British programme of cadastral survey sought to institutionalise private property with a precision never before attempted. All cultivated land was assigned by the state to individuals, while ownership of uncultivated land remained ambiguous and largely a matter of precedent. The British-organised survey was limited to areas of rain-fed agriculture (Figures 3.1-3.4 - note the survey map corresponds to the area of Jordan with sufficient rainfall for irrigated agriculture).

The British Mandate appointed in 1926 Ernst MacCloud Dowson, who recommended a full fiscal and cadastral survey. He also recommended imposing the Torrens System, developed in Australia, and applied in Egypt and other colonial contexts. This forced claimants to register the land centrally, with a state body as the final arbiter, rather than the British system of keeping personal title deeds that could be disputed in court. Though most of the 1858 Ottoman Land Laws and the Ottoman categories of land were maintained as precedents, Dowson favoured reform as well as codification and standardization. He described tribal ownership and the *musha*’ system, as well as wider forms of ‘socially-controlled’ land as ‘a severe obstacle to development’ (Fischbach 2000:81) and areas with low individual ownership were targeted between 1927-1933 by the survey teams conducting Jordan’s first fiscal survey.

Local teams headed by British trained surveyors armed with theodolite and plane table created a 1/10,000 scale cadastral map, followed by hearings to establish *taswiya*, ‘settlement’. Through mapping village boundaries and the division of land into *hawd*, ‘basins’, units of roughly equal value, final absolute ownership was theoretically established. The state then issued a *sanad*, a deed of ownership, with the ultimate proof residing in the central land registry.

Though the division of lands by the British is usually remembered as a fair process (Fischbach 2000), especially in areas where small-holding predominated, a series of political considerations crept into decision making in the Madaba region, where a system of plantation and quasi-manorial villages were subject to land claims by politically or militarily significant elites like the Bani Sakhr, and where, as we have seen, appropriation by shaykhs was common. The Sukhur villages were surveyed individually in the early 1930s, before the general survey reached them, as it was feared disputes over land had the potential to damage the Government and its tentative alliance

Figure 3.1-Figure 3.4 (clockwise from top left). 3.1: The original scope of the survey (reproduced from Fischbach 2000:56). 3.2: Part of an early 1/10000 Cadastral map of Amman (DLS). 3.3: Vegetation and precipitation map of Jordan (reproduced from CIA World Factbook 2007). 3.4: Photograph of Jordanian survey in progress in the field using plane table, alidade and theodolite (reproduced from Fischbach 2000:81).



with Mithqal al-Fayiz (Fischbach, personal communication, village notes). Certain key shaykhs like Mithqal were awarded thousands of dunum, and thus became complicit and reliant on the state for their position. The villages on these lands often still have an unclear status, with families within them having paid to register land that might also be registered to these shaykhs and their descendants. One interlocutor said ‘the villages

around here were unfair from the beginning – the British intended 400 *dunum* per family, whether shaykh or herder. But the shaykh took 6,000 *dunum* and we got four each’.

There are many tales of disruption and trickery as families with little experience with documentary government struggled to produce (supposedly Ottoman) documentary claims to aid their cases. There was, most agree, a steep rise in indebtedness and landlessness among normal people who via ‘owning’ land-as-property were suddenly able to access capital, as Glubb later noted with concern, fearing the Bedouin would become indebted urbanites (Glubb 1933). In the longer term, Fischbach (2000) argues, this resulted in a slow but noticeable decrease in the equity of distribution and a rise in inequality, though never to the degree of Syria or Egypt.

From 1932-1938 Glubb sent monthly reports to the Arab Legion HQ, devoting considerable attention to the Bani Sakhr villages. He reported with satisfaction increased cultivation as a positive development in Sukhur villages, especially as some Sukhur began farming themselves, and soon police stations were established in the region, at Ziziya and then at Um al-‘Amad (Glubb 1932, 1938, 1939). Many herders had lost everything in the pre-war years due to Wahabi Ikhwan raids from Najd, loss of winter grazing when the Mandate surrendered Wadi Sirhan to Najd, drought and a general price depression, coming to rely ever more on government relief work and military salaries, as well as direct aid from Glubb (Glubb 1932). Simultaneously, as Glubb’s forces were increasingly able to suppress raiding and to prevent major attacks, the *khuwa* system of tributary payments from protected cultivators largely ended, and this significant channel by which Bedouin accessed goods from the settled zone, including subsistence carbohydrates, was blocked off. Thus the Government was in part responsible for collapsing the pastoral economy and then alleviating the worst effects, creating a long-term relationship of dependency.

Larger changes were implied by the enforcement of land principles, which though having precedents in Ottoman and Islamic Law, were applied in new ways and to new areas. Crucially, as only cultivated or built on land could be registered, wider senses of *dira*, although not directly suppressed, were also not protected by law. While summer camps and land holdings were within the bounds of settlement, and often involved sufficient planting and watering, and could thus be registered, in general the vast areas of winter grazing and the paths taken to them each year were not (Fischbach 2000). As such, the area previously merely constituting a summer residence for herding

families became the centre of their established land ownership, and therefore of ideas of *dira*. Yet, as we shall see, wider claims to land based on older ideals never fully subsided, and traces live on, even in legal practices, where nebulous ideas of influence and rights form usage are still used in court, as settlement has expanded outwards.

In 1952, the first full census was taken listing numbers and types of habitation in every known settlement (Fischbach 2000). Um al-Walid had no permanent structures beyond animal shelters in the ruins of the *khirbāt*, despite being settled in 1934 and home to 25 families living in tents. The entire Sukhur area had 352 permanent houses, and 2000 tents. Only in Huwara, Manja and Um al-‘Amad were permanent buildings used by around half the population (DoS 1952). Um Ahmed, Hamid’s elderly great-aunt, told me that the first houses built in the ruins of Um al-Walid were for storage, people found tents more spacious and comfortable. Permanent larger houses were built in the 1960s, and by 1970 Um al-Walid was connected to electricity and telephone lines with a village school and health clinic. By this time, most families stopped seasonal migration, in order to not miss out on these services or pension payments.

In contrast to the Sukhur villages, interviewees of similar age in the Hamaydah villages of Mukawir and ad-Dīr reported both villages were several decades old by the 1952 census, though most inhabitants either went into the Ghor (the hot low-lying Jordan Valley) or the *Bādiyah* seasonally with their flocks. Electricity and piped water arrived only in the 1990s. Many two-room houses were abandoned slowly in this period in favour of multi-room, multi-floor homes for several related nuclear families. More common has been the slow addition of rooms, stairways and outbuildings every few years when money is available. During a visit to beneficiaries of the Bani Hamida weaving NGO in Mukawir, one friend of Halima’s showed me with pride a staircase her family had built following a recent windfall, going nowhere, but signalling their intention to add another floor for a married son. In similar fashion, villages have expanded piecemeal, growing onto land which then has to be re-registered. As this process continued, the Bedouin villages in the Madaba region came to be settled, permanent habitations; increasingly connected to national systems of infrastructure and services, legally owned and lived in by citizen-subjects under national law and market forces. But beneath the surface, much remained unsettled.

Through successive reforms of the land system, ideas of land being tied in ways other than private ownership to name/space entities have persisted. This has both been reflected in and shaped by state legal regimes. Since independence in 1946 the

Government has offered some sort of recognition to ideas of ‘tribal’ land beyond mere technical legal registration, especially in unsurveyed areas where registration remained rare, even while maintaining its own pre-eminence as a land-owner. Since then, even as older ideas of *dira* lost tangible and material political and economic meaning and become largely discursive, the concept of *wajjahah* - from an Arabic root meaning ‘face’ - came to prominence. Originally used to refer to officially-accepted grazing routes under the Ottomans, it came now to mean that specific ‘*ashā’ir* could claim customary usage rights over land that was technically *miri* (i.e. state land), and which was usually not legally registered elsewhere, and as such the state would not challenge their usage and a general proprietorial claim of interest, without prior consultation (see Al Naber and Molle 2016). In practice this worked more in some areas and with some people than others. Those from powerful or politically sensitive families (like the Sukhur, and especially the al-Fayiz) invested in local land and with reputations were predictably better able to make use of this paralegal category than others. The consequences of such ambiguities have been significant, as we shall see, especially to efforts to create a functioning national land market.

3.3 The Consequences and the Limitations of Settlement

As we have seen, attempts to settle the Bedouin villages of Madaba and render them legible have met with mixed and often unintended results. By the 1952 land survey, changing legal and social infrastructures of land ownership were already transforming the agricultural landscape of the area, as well as the social. Central to both transformations was access to water. The Sukhur shaykhs who got into plantation farming and registration since the 1880s had already taken the best rain-fed land in the north-west of the Sukhur *dira*, while those from humbler backgrounds who settled later registered land further east. This put further economic pressure on families to diversify out from pastoralism and agriculture and into salaried work in the military and government, so that some family members with regular incomes could support their families through hard years. In order to claim and register land, families often tried some irrigated agriculture. This was not a general expansion of the desert sown line as envisaged by Ottoman and colonial rulers, but rather smaller isolated enclosures. To irrigate such enclosures in areas ever further east where seasonal rainfall becomes unpredictable, required every greater expense. Wells south and east of Madaba regularly need to reach a depth of 500 meters to hit water, and even then supplies can be short-

lived and intermittent. To sink a well for most requires selling land or borrowing money. I was told of one Hamaydah army officer who had spent over 50,000 dinars on sinking a deep well in the 1980s, which was now producing salty water, useless to his fruit trees.

Relatedly, the replacement of the *musha'* system (where land was owned communally via shares) with individual ownership resulted in a surge of tree-planting (Palmer 1999), especially olive trees. Planting trees has long been associated with inheritance (*turāth*) permanence and steady income. Trees were considered property of families or households, not larger units, even when on communal land (Palmer 1999), which made their planting politically difficult in *Musha'* villages. Tree-planting accelerated post-settlement, as a way of materialising new claims to land, offering the chance of larger profits but also requiring considerable water. In particular, the 1970s and 1980s saw an explosion of olive-growing in particular in the Jabal Bani Hamida (Jones 2006) but also in Sukhur villages. As rain-irrigated land – snapped up earlier in registration by those with the political clout to do so – ever greater effort, investment and risk was involved in planting trees and irrigating them on land which received sufficient rainfall only intermittently. I heard several accounts of men who had been convinced to plant trees by several years of good rainfall where neighbours had made large profits, only for future drier years to require expensive irrigation. The former world of nucleated villages around old ruined *khirbāt* core, of open cereal strip fields has been replaced by sprawling mixture of residences and enclosures dotted with trees.

Much Sukhur land (less among the Hamaydah) is by a few rich families, either those of shaykhs or also now outside city-dwellers. This land is often farmed by Hauranis and Egyptians or else hobby-farmed, and was either registered by shaykhs early on or bought from Bedouin selling it off to fund weddings, house-building, education and other expenses of social reproduction. Um al-‘Amad, traditionally the headquarters of al-Fayiz shaykhs, is now, as we shall see in the next chapter, a sprawling mass of mansions and villas, overlooking irrigated enclosures worked by foreign labourers. Pastoralists have largely disappeared from the landscape here, at a supposed centre of Sukhur Bedouin power. Small-scale freehold farming of the sort the Mandate imagined is less and less viable as subsidies vanish, costs rise and irrigation becomes unaffordable for those without access to capital. Hind al-Fayiz, in an interview, told me that regularly normal shepherds complain to her of the ‘mega-flocks’ operated by businessmen, like the international oil magnate Ziyad Manasīr and other

rich entrepreneurs, using Syrian labour and expertise, which now dominate the commercial domestic meat industry. ‘These men [ordinary Bedouin] often now have, three or four animals, and they are trying to sell, but they are being outcompeted by Manasīr. This is shameful, how can he compete with these people?’. The few huge commercial herds are normally part of diversified financial portfolios, and so can afford to truck in water and barley during years with low rainfall, while many ordinary herders are forced to sell or decrease the size of their herds. Bedouin pastoralism like olive-growing is primarily now for consumption and sale within extended social networks, rather than to a public market. Pasture-land ironically is relatively plentiful as large areas of cultivation are no longer regularly sown except for forage, as cereal growing is no longer cost-effective even as the market and feed-price have made pastoralism for meat and dairy economically impossible.

As the economy of the Bedouin villages moved away from pastoralism, there was a corresponding shift in what made land valuable. While once land with good grazing and permanent water sources was most valuable for the winter dwelling, with the decoupling of economic productivity from the land’s innate properties, new concerns emerged, such as nearness to the capital and to major roads. Sukhur villages saw military employment become the central economic activity by the early 1950s. Every family I knew had at least one member in or retired from the military. Many Hamaydah did too, especially those in the Jabal and Mleih and Libb (less from Dhiban) and showed me pictures with pride of their service as UN Peacekeepers. These jobs, especially for the well-networked among the Sukhur, led to other Government and court appointments.¹¹ Pensions required an address and also regular visits to various urban offices. While some successful government-employees moved to Amman, it became common as roads improved for men to commute daily to Amman from the nearer Bedouin villages, often via Madaba – a journey of over an hour. Every morning Hamid left Um al-Walid at 5am to take a bus to Madaba, where he would buy a snack and coffee and wait for a free ministry bus to take him to the Ministry of Finance.

With this shift, the land which Bedouin ‘*ashā’ir* had historically occupied (based on quite different considerations and under different historical circumstances) and had

¹¹ Following King Hussein’s decision in the 1980s to send ‘Government out into the Governorates’, low-skilled ministerial employment, for instance in the Agricultural or Municipal Ministry became significant. This was when Khalid in ar-Rama found work in the Municipal Ministry as a labourer and later administrator, allowing him to expand his house with a separate *dīwān* and invest in a tourism business. Workers in these areas rolled out services to remote former-pastoral communities. Again, the Jabal was more excluded by its geography than Sukhur villages to the East of Madaba.

thus been able to claim during settlement, took on new significance. In particular the differences in the political economy of the Sukhur and the Hamaydah, both Bedouin *awalad al-balad* ('children of the land') – a phrase meaning 'original' East-Banker Jordanians, often considered the natural supporters and beneficiaries of the royal house—grew much larger. This hints at how *'ashīrah*-type name/space categories come to be used to think and talk about the geographical and social landscape, as well as how particular cleavages and associations within them are historically contingent. But equally, the interior histories of resentment and alternative historical narratives within the Sukhur (seen in Section 2.1), suggest other ways in which people categorise and think about groups in social life, also based on this realignment of conceptual geography. The difference in wealth, and conceptual geography, between the mansion-lined Fayiz village of Um al-'Amad and the Dahamshah village of Um al-Walid, where I spent much of my time, is as wide in many respects as between Mukawir in the Jabal and Um al-Walid.

As discussed, ambiguities still haunt the land system. In theory, the legible, centralised system of land registration, settlement and arbitration brought in by the Mandate is still the basis for Jordan's land system (notwithstanding some major reforms, including ending the status of *miri* land in 2015). Citizens still interreact with the system via the Department of Land and Survey - *da'irah al-arady wa al-masāha* (DLS), still in its original Mandate-era building on Jabal al-Wabdah. Yet the building is entered by appointment only, and access to the registers restricted. I managed to gain access to the building through politely asking guards who I might talk to arrange an appointment to discuss my research. On the first occasion, I was led to the communications official, who over coffee in a vast tiled room showed me various photographs and items from the original Mandate survey, as well as on a computer the current anonymised cadastral map – items he hoped would satisfy my curiosity. I asked if I might see the settlement files, as I knew others, including Fischbach had in the 1990s. I was told it might be possible, but I would need to see the director, and would need various permissions and credentials. I got these together and visited again on several occasions. I exchanged pleasantries and swapped business-cards with good-natured officials to no avail. I was always told to come back later. In the end, Michael Fischbach kindly sent me his own notes on the Sukhur villages from his visit. The

refusal of my requests to view archival materials shows how sensitive land registration remains.¹²

As mentioned above, the post-colonial government in Jordan has equivocated about recognising the concept of *wajahāt* (tribal land claims to *miri* or state land). Since independence however much *miri* land has been registered, enclosed, cultivated or seized. Claims and counter claims have proliferated. In 2011 matters calmed to a head with mass protests calling for a return of land, to its rightful *‘ashīrah* owners, and landless unemployed young men blocked major highways to demand redistribution (Al Naber and Molle 2016). We will return to these protests in more detail below. The important point for now is that while promising on several occasions to re-examine the ownership of *wajahāt* and bedouin land claims more broadly, no conclusive settlement or method has yet been found to do so. Since 2011 the king has indeed distributed much *Miri* land to tribal owners, but never in a way which clears up the general legal and political situation of this land in a consistent way, but beyond statements that the DLS is working on a map of claims and an agreed settlement, little has happened.¹³

Regardless of the interests of other land owners and the benefits the state itself gains from maintaining this creative ambiguity, the question of how land even could be redistributed to a ‘tribe’ gets at the central problem of what a ‘tribe’ is in contemporary Jordan. Communal shareholding, redistribution down to the family level or holdings registered in the names of a few key figures - likely shaykhs - have all been discussed and tried, and each have thrown up insoluble problems, lingering dissatisfaction and further legal confusion – much of which, of course, is strategically useful for the Government). Al Naber and Molle (2016) describe a number of cases where the Government has muddied the water by acknowledging large, extra-registry ‘tribal’ claims to land. Several thousand dunum were settled on a Bani Hasan *‘ashīrah* during a dispute over land seized for a government housing project, distributed as shares to various families through not entirely transparent processes. In another instance during the 2011 protests, fearing unrest in the south, the king transferred 70,000 *dunum* to the Huwaītāt and others around Ma’an, officially to be distributed equally per household, but in practice favouring key elites (*ibid.*:495). Talking unofficially to a Department

¹² Alon (2009, 2016) suggests the sensitivity is partly around evidence that landowners, including Mithqal al-Fayiz, considered selling large tracts of ‘tribal land’ to Zionists via the Jewish Agency in Palestine in the interwar years.

¹³ In 2014 the then-Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour publicly demanded the DLS sort out and standardise tribal land claims (Jordan Times 2014), and *wajahāt* were brought up by Bani Sakhr Shaykh Jamal Khraisha in 2015 during a meeting with the king (Jordan Times 2015).

member, he admitted the issue was difficult, and many came to the Department looking to gather evidence to make opportunistic legal claims. The Department still talks about producing a comprehensive map of *wajahāt* – the acknowledged category of tribal land claims - showing every dunum by ‘*ashīrah* and *qabīlah*. The official I spoke to acknowledged this would be difficult, if not impossible. What would such claims do about private ownership? In many conversations I was assured that ‘all *Badu* know and understand the boundaries of their *dīra*’ but this is problematised by the vast number of cases and competing claims. Outside of the aesthetic and often illusory power of ‘maps’, it is hard to see what is ‘settled’ in land settlement.

The problems of landlessness, inequality and lack of housing thrown up by mass-migration and urbanisation have, as we have seen, made these questions especially important. These problems were subjected to international development programming in the 1980s when the World Bank, concerned by the increasing permanence of Palestinian camps in Jordan, offered the country a raft of projects directed by their ‘Shelter Unit’ (Hughes 2016). Started in the early 1980s as a squatter settlement standardisation programme, as the wider Bretton Woods intervention in Jordan got under way in the late 1980s its goals expanded to the creation of a nation of ‘owner builders’. The ‘Shelter Unit’ sought to address the problems those Palestinians unable to buy property by creating a fluid and functioning housing market, dominated by ‘owner builders’ who claimed unregistered land, built houses on and then registered it. While owner-builder-occupation was the stated ideal, it was also recognised that some speculative development would be useful to increase housing stock, and bring more housing onto the market for those who could not access housing through the traditional routes of family compound expansion or land gifts on marriage. It aimed to regularise, legalise and bring infrastructure to unplanned areas of urban sprawl rising on tribal land at the edge of the expanding capital,¹⁴ yet it rested on threats of seizure and informal channels of communication, so that full market transparency was never a likely outcome. Many of these ‘squatter settlements’, by the 1980s densely-built suburbs, were rent-farms for certain Bedouin families who claimed land around the capital, and who sought payment in return for the right to build, but whose own legal claim to the land was unofficial. Clearing up ownership in favour of the occupiers was for them a

¹⁴ Especially Zarqa, but in this way some land in Zizia, or al-Jiza as it was increasingly called by non-Sukhur speakers, also came to be settled by those of West Bank origin.

troubling outcome. As standardization made this problem clearer, various schemes to compensate shaykhs and even whole tribal sections, to recognise their claims as landowners but allow their tenants some form of secondary ownership, and in the face of uncooperative shaykhs, seizure, were used at different times by different government actors. Rather than clear-cut, transparent and market-based, land ownership remained a matter for political contestation and negotiation, in which those with strong names and reputations were often best able to come to beneficial accord with the state. Thus even as the World Bank has sought to turn Jordan into a nation of ‘owner builders’ Jordan’s land policy has increasingly favoured a shrinking segment of its population; those who can afford to settle new land and develop it, and those able to claim and hold land that has risen in value around Amman. Many others feel they have unfairly been deprived.

3.4 Contesting Land: crisis and adaptation

Efforts to reform Jordan’s land system have sought to create a legible and rationalised system of individual subject-owners, but also and sometimes contradictorily, a free and liquid market for land-as-commodity. Both aspirations, often in tension with each other, have found reasons to compromise with other less official practices, and both been blunted by deep continuities, popular expectations around moral economy, and political contingency. In particular I have shown how the late-Ottoman shaykhly plantations of the Madaba region were based on notions of property often widely seen as communal land, but in fact closer to appanage or manorialism, and in many cases converted by Ottoman and British officials into claims of individual ownership, in a setting where individual ownership encompassed hierarchical types of usage-rights. However revisionist notions of what land is, especially ideas of it as communal, misappropriated or as open to contestation, have also arisen. In this setting, therefore, land remains subject to political contestation and overlapping but distinct meanings. At the same time, as far as the latter aspiration for a free and liquid market for land traded as a commodity has been achieved, it has been achieved because of, not despite, these compromises, continuities and ambiguities. This is not surprising, given the difficulties described above in dealing with the Department of Land and Survey, and the unwillingness or inability of state actors to provide final, binding clarification. More broadly, even when land ownership is established, it is not always easy to use it as capital. Although too large and detailed a topic to explore here, bank loans with property collateral and mortgages are both difficult to access and religiously

problematic for many, and alternative Islamic finance mortgage-like (*ista'jar*) and loan-like instruments are exorbitantly expensive and subject to lingering suspicions around potentially being *ribā*, 'usury'. Thus other ways of raising capital from different types of claim and possession of land have come into being. A discourse of crisis and distrust around the state's bureaucratic procedures disguises the way creative practices have grown up in its shadows.

In Amman during my fieldwork everyone was talking about the city growing, the rising price of housing, and the problem of transport as the city grew eastwards. Work on a new rapid bus transit route heralded as relieving congestion, was over budget and behind schedule, the subject of wry jokes; the only thing it could move 'rapidly', one taxi driver said, was money into the bank-accounts of developers. In this city of rising prices, inequality and gridlock, the phrase *āzmah*, meaning both traffic congestion, but also more broadly 'crisis' was ubiquitous. In the Eastern Desert, which along with 75% of the country remained unsurveyed and unregistered before 2000 (Al-Naber and Molle 2016) talk of building a new city in the desert are met with derision but also from some, speculation. In the face of mass-migration (78% of the refugee population in Jordan lives in cities, especially Amman, not camps (UNHCR 2016)) many expect another expansion eastward of cheap housing and development from Amman, like those of Zarqa and the Airport area in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁵ This has made land worth speculatively claiming even when its agricultural and pastoral value has become negligible since subsidies ended. Some Sukhur families with vague traditional claims to pasturage in these areas have enclosed pockets of land, irrigated it and planted a few saplings to claim ownership (or have sold the right to others to do so), in the hope that developers will buy it off them in a few years.

The mechanism facilitating this febrile land speculation, alongside practices of enclosure and seizure, is the *hijjah* (lit. an argument or proof), a type of unofficial document of cessation. Once referring to contracts or verbal agreements pertaining to land sales, in areas where full registration and settlement took place under the Ottomans and British, it was largely superseded by the *Sanad*. Difficulties in registration at the DLS has incentivised more flexible ways of profiting from and trading in potential but

¹⁵ This process of ribbon development along the Yajouz highway, creating the modern dormitory-city of Zarqa (where many more recent refugees from Palestine have settled), by which some Bani Hasan become wealthy and others landless protesters, is described in the academic work of the former Prime Minister, Omar Razzaz (1994).

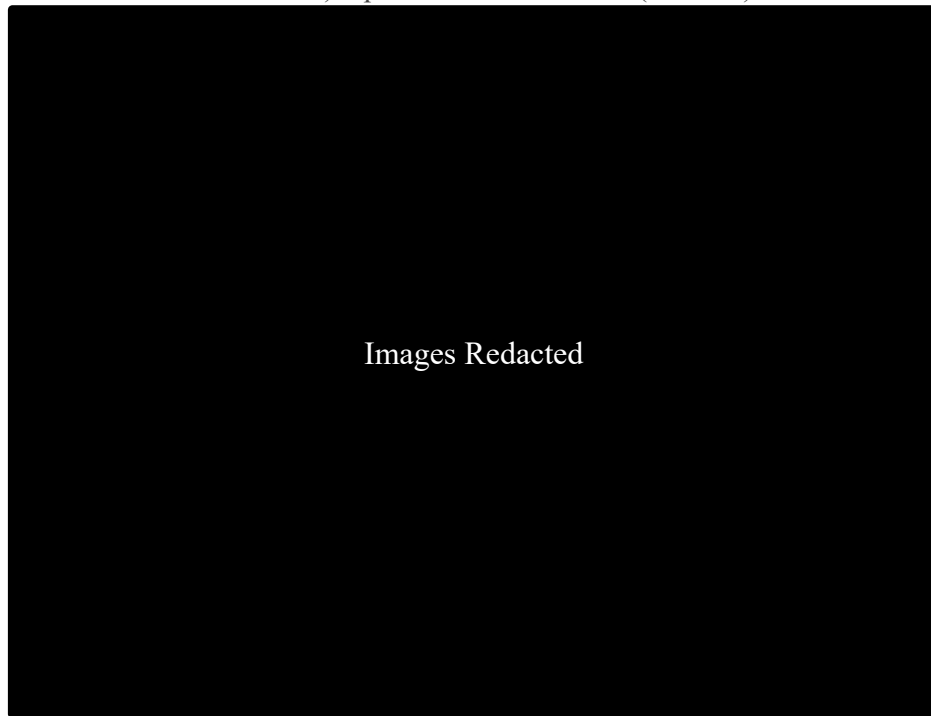
bureaucratically and legally unclear claims to land, and so the idea of a paralegal agreement, colloquially accepted as proving ownership if not challenged, has become increasingly important once more.

Those with various types of claim on land give up and transfer this *claim*, promising to make no trouble for the holder of the *hijjah* (through litigation or less official means). Only the very strong or foolhardy buy property in tribal areas without also buying the *hijjah*, fearing otherwise they may find their property vandalised or worse. The value of a *hijjah* thus depends on not only the strength of the legal claim, but the reputation and potential to deliver bureaucratic difficulties or physical violence. Ideas of reputation, name/space, and inalienable sovereignty are thus reproduced through and by this practice. A friend and academic colleague told me how his family had recently parted with 400 dunum of a larger estate land his Grandfather bought from a Bani Hasan shaykh in the north in the 1950s, as despite having bought the *Hijjah* at the time, the shaykh's grandchildren now disputed it. The family had agreed to part with some land in the end to prevent a long legal case or the risk of violent confrontation. This new settlement was described as perpetual, but as my friend admitted wryly, there is nothing to stop their children or those of their friends and hangers-on repeating the process in a few decades, save that gaining a reputation for this sort of thing might make a *hijjah* from them less valuable. Anecdotally such cases are common. It is not unknown for both parties in a land dispute to present a rival *hijjah*, sometimes from rival tribal claimants, sometimes from shaykhs at different levels of the tribal system.

These documents officially carry no legal weight in Jordan. The DLS publishes public warnings that no land sale is valid without registration with them. However, I was told during my interviews at the DLS that boundary appeal tribunals were very unlikely to find for the plaintiff if a *hijjah* were later found, showing they had voluntarily (if extra-legally) alienated part of their property, and thus though not condoned by the law, these documents do come to take on legal force and a legal bureaucratic character. Anecdotally some lawyers will take on cases where a *hijjah* contract has been disregarded, suggesting the possibility of legal redress – although normally such threats are used only for bargaining. *Hijjah* documents also mimic state documents. Even when handwritten they normally are done on thick, unlined print paper with official-looking letter-heads and often feature the royal coat of arms. People often pay a small fee to have notaries or other public officials add official-looking stamps to the documents (see figure 3.6). Marwan's father, Ibrahim told me that it was

so complicated to sell off his family's land in Dulaīlat Mutirāt when they moved permanently to Madaba, what with uncertain claims, missing papers, legal fees and familial disputes, that he eventually just sold a *hijjah*. They used the *hijjah* to bargain, and to access capital in advance of formal sale. Increasingly though, Ibrahim told me, people just sold the *hijjah*, without ever passing on legal ownership, making this an independent attribute to ownership, causing extra-legal chains beyond the land registry.

Figures 3.5 and 3.6 (left to right): Land documents. 3.5: Reproduction of an Ottoman-era contract in the Abu Jaber House, as-Salt. 3.6: *Hijjah* with ministerial crest and contact details (but official letterhead crossed out) reproduced from Razzaz (1994:26).



Unlike formal market sales, to sell land in this way involves explicitly or implicitly a pledge of protection for the buyer from the seller, against future challenges and actual attacks from the seller's wider family, neighbours and tribal categories. Ibrahim and other interlocutors said that as chains of sale grew longer the protective promise was less acknowledged.¹⁶ In this sense, rather than the individual and commodified ownership intended in Jordan's reforming land legislation, a system has emerged allowing trade, speculation and commoditization, while retaining ideas of a wider relational social, and the centrality of sovereignty through interpersonal relationships,

¹⁶ Razzaz (1994:25) states that in the 1980s it was still common for the contract to contain promises of protection from anyone, though from the 1980s the documents included an amended form, excusing the seller from protecting the buyer against the state.

based around notions of trust and mutual recognition of honour. This system is partially independent of the state, but references and relies upon its forms and practices.

The use of a *hijjah* thus allows various types of contested communal usufructuary claim to be converted, for those with enough power to do so, into capital. Textual authority is thus taken seriously, but the state's ability to monopolise it is contested, and indeed the state has come to accept and expect such contestations. Thus whatever the rhetorical claims to settlement being permanent, absolute and creating a singular mode of land-claim and ownership, reality remains pregnant with alternative schemes.

This possibility for flexibility, speculation and the re-assertion of social concerns in the realm of land as commodity, is none-the-less concentrated among those with money, influence, reputation or often all of these things. Those comparatively poor and obscure can usually no more sell a Hijjah claim than they can act as a guarantor on a loan or dispute resolution settlement. These social practices require, in the terms I set out in Chapter 2, a certain weight of name, and of purse, that go beyond mere purchasing power. Yet even those who are unable to directly and strategically manipulate ambiguities around the ownership (and meaning of ownership) of land, can make productive use of them. In particular, as already suggested, ideas of land alienation form a key part of discourses of a breached social contract between rulers and ruled; a moral economy of rupture. The historical transformations explored earlier in this chapter are thus still of immediate concern in the present, and are subject to various reinterpretations in order to make arguments in the present. Old, superseded notions of land, palimpsest-like, re-emerge in new combinations and with new emphases.

The use of moral economy type arguments relating to land, especially among Bedouin who imagine a land-rich past of communal rights to vast areas, has become a key part of protesters' discourses. I shall discuss these in more detail in Chapter 6, but for now a particular example relating to land may be useful. From 2018, the aforementioned scholar and opposition politician Dr Ahmed Oweidi al-'Abbadi began to tour the country addressing crowds interested in his nationalist, pro-trial message of Jordan for Jordanians, holding meetings at which he displayed a map of Jordan based on that in Frederick Peake's (1958:253) book on Jordan's tribes.¹⁷ This map showed rough areas of movement and claimed *dira* for major tribal categories (see figures 4.6 and 4.7). Oweidi shows this as a representation of land distribution at the beginning of

¹⁷ Frederick Peake was C.O. the Arab Legion (1921-1939).

the Mandate. Next to it, a cadastral map shows who owns the land now. The once solid and continuous blocks of ‘tribal territory’ imagined by Peake and others as something between communal land and a sub-national polity (but as we have seen, in some cases really more like aristocratic fiefdoms), are now fragmented; much is state-owned, and much is also owned by urban investors and figures close to the court. Oweidi uses these maps to explain how the agreement between the *'ashā'ir* and the royal house upon which Jordan as a nation-state is built, has been exploited. The ‘change’ in ‘ownership’ he suggests these two maps show, is presented as proof that the state have stolen Land. ‘Eighty percent of Jordan is stolen from the Tribes’ he announced recently on a shared video (in English). Dr Ahmed Oweidi knows better than most (Oweidi 1982) that the way that people ‘owned’ the land over which their categorical names appear on the map was very different from the ownership suggested in the Cadastral map. As we have seen, *dīra* as a notion contained a great variety of political relationships and forms, ranging from varied levels of hierarchically-controlled access to communal grazing and resources, to tributary protection and shaykhly appanage. As we have also seen, even the supposedly most communal notions of land rights, the so-called *mush'a* system, in fact placed decision-making power and pre-eminence in the hands of certain dominant lineages. In this history of land, non-shaykhly families like Dr Ahmed’s own ‘Uwāīdi *'ashīrah* would have occupied a subordinate position within the ‘Abbadi *dīra*.

It might therefore seem that the use of this old ‘tribal’ map has little to offer, but on the contrary, its deep historical resonances seem to strike a chord, repurposing ideas of ‘the tribe’ as a largely undifferentiated and seemingly egalitarian solidary group, as a way of claiming recompense from a state that has taken the land. In this way the elitist, shaykhly vision of history espoused whenever Hind al-Fayiz complains that ‘when the tribes took in the Hashemites they came as fugitives not conquerors – they did not come with a sword in their hands’ – becomes something potentially collectivist, which can include everyone, both former masters of the land, and their clients and associates, both possessors of names, and those merely covered by them.

As we shall see in Chapter 6, these arguments find traction far beyond Dr Ahmed’s nationalist movement. In Dhiban too, Hirak activists find common cause on the issue of land. The ‘Friday of land return’ protests in 2011, Sabri told me, was when he realised the protest were a just case. Those involved believed they ‘owned’ their

Figure 3.7: *Dira* Map. Reproduced from Map 2 from Peake (1958:253). 'Beni Sakhr', 'Beni Hamida' and Dr Ahmed's own 'Abbad' are all marked.

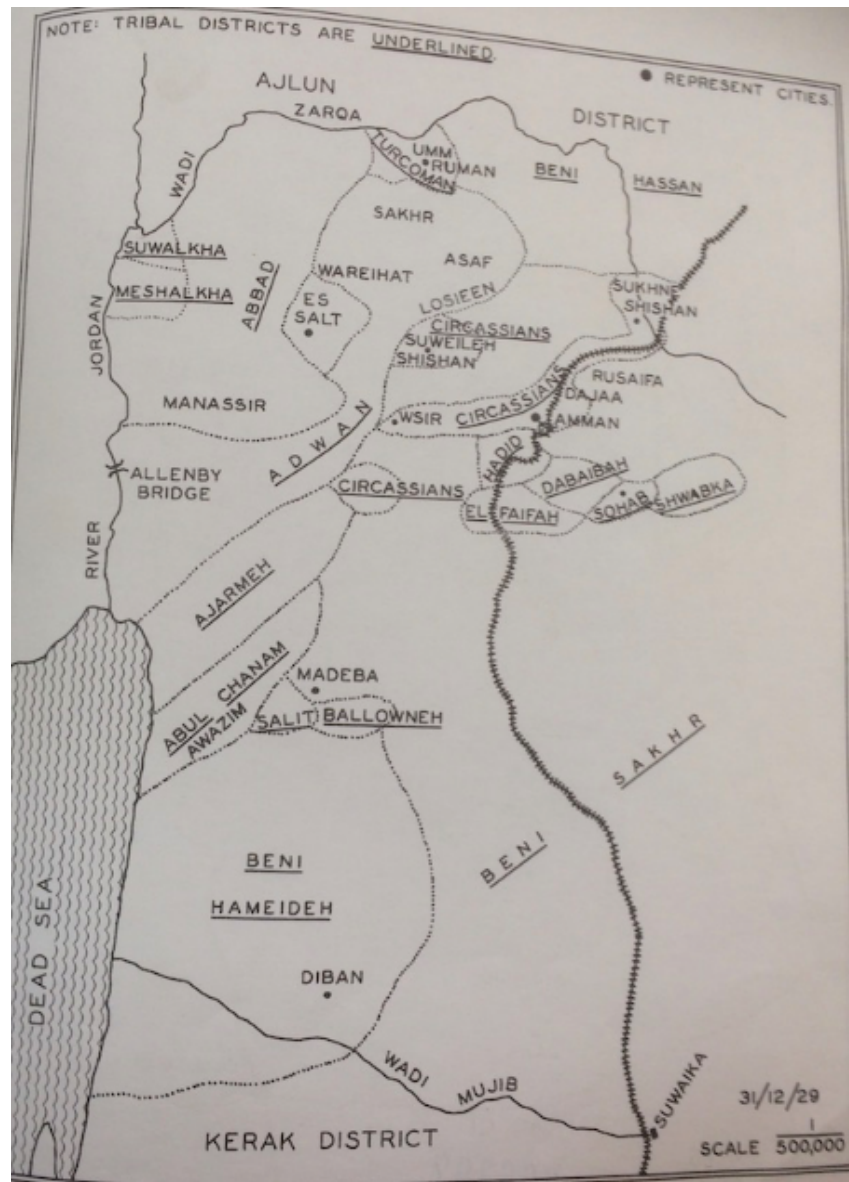


Figure 3.8: Dr Ahmed Oweidi al-'Abbadi with his *shmargh* inside out talks to journalists, tribal leaders and protesters in front of a cadastral map of Jordan. Photo by Al Jazeera, from Dr Ahmed's WhatsApp.

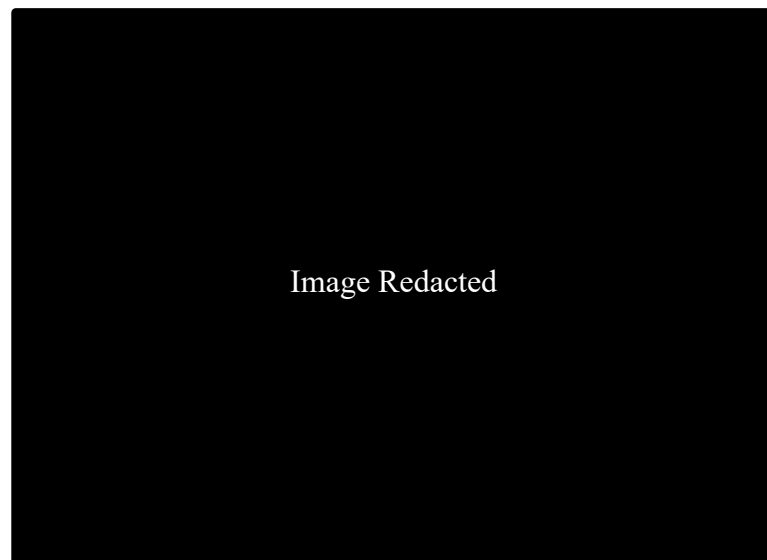


Image Redacted

tribal *dira*, the territories their *‘ashīrah* had once been associated with and had claimed rights of use over. In the intervening years though, the land had been ‘lost’. The unemployment tent, erected on the common land of the town square, was also associated with ideas of land ownership and landlessness, he said. The men who took part in the unemployment tent cannot be absorbed into herding or agriculture as during down-turns in previous generations. Many of them think of themselves as in a sense corporate ‘owners’ of the Hamaydah *dira*, as well as land actually owned by their families. Lacking resources to exploit this land, much of which is drying out, and with increasing enclosure and sale, such claims may amount to little economically, but still resonate. For ‘Ali al-Brizāt, and many of the people in Jabal Bani Hamida, while a return to pastoralism is not always the most desirable opportunity for the young, it remains ‘the foundation’ (*al-assasa*) for meaningful social life, and without it, life is hard to bear. Muhammad as-Snayd, as manager of the state land near Dhiban, similarly felt agricultural development was the only way forward for Dhiban. The specifics of the land protests since 2011 have often been extremely localised, even parochial in scope, emerging out of relationships between neighbours as well as between big government projects. As such, land remains a central and under-utilised lens for examining the background to both Jordan’s long-term relative stability (relative to its neighbours), and the current ‘unsettling’ of East-Bankers, the supposed loyalist backbone of the Nation-state

3.5 Conclusion

I have focused on land in order to further my general argument about how the contemporary political economy of the Bedouin villages, as well as their discursive Bedouin-ness and ‘tribal’-ness, is historically emergent; marked by processes of imperial penetration, sedenterisation, colonial rule, as well as by wider economic crises, policies and the stresses of migration, environment and water. Yet the inhabitants of the Bedouin villages are not just passive subjects to these forces. They live within and help reproduce a complex political milieu with its own dynamics and notions of land, politics, and sovereignty. They often conjure up their own imaginaries of moral economy to interpret this experience. The never entirely displaced ideas of *dira*, *wajahāt*, and of shared village land have been codified and adapted rather than dispensed with under Ottoman, colonial and more recent reformist regimes. Hierarchical

but socially-accepted ways of claiming, managing and contesting access to land beyond outright individual commodified ownership, based around protection, honour and techniques of pastoralism, have governed socially accepted land-use, and still influence adaptive strategies to contest land. I suggest that these older local notions of land entangled with land reforms to produce political economic change dialogically.

Crucially, this approach allows for a far greater recognition of hierarchy, inequality and sovereignty in these settings, both as long-standing historical realities, and as they take on new forms and shapes, countering the flatness in many descriptions of tribes and Bedouin as almost single subjects, obscuring internal socio-economic differences. It is essential to understand the estate-owning shaykhs who shaped the Bedouin villages of the Sukhur lands to understand how the inhabitants of these villages have responded to land crises, contemporary land speculation and sale, as well as villigisation and enclosure-making further east. Equally, both land inequality and more general ideas of moral economy and a tilting of power and influence, as well as land ownership, away from the Bedouin, are essential to understanding contemporary rural protests.

I have sought in this chapter to outline the various, often contradictory, attempts that have been made to reform society through reforming land in Jordan. Many of these envisaged, to varying degrees, taking a system which functioned as a hierarchy of claims on the land, of rights and responsibilities defined as part of a complex wider socio-economic environment, and transforming it into one of clear and absolute ownership, whether individual or state. This clarity was supposed to lead to an expansion of agriculture, investment and tax income. Later, related but distinct developmental ideas of liberalising the land market, allowing housing and land to become more fluid, encouraged further alienation of land from its social fabric. And yet such an alienated system of relating to the land has not fully come into being in Jordan. The discussion of the trade and sale of *hijjāt* shows its limitations, as does the wider ways in which the reduction of land to neutral commodity is resisted or rendered impractical. What is more, land, as I have begun to explore and will return to in Chapter 6, is a central cause for rural protest movements, and as a medium for social relations and as a materialisation of political relationships and inequalities, land is essential to understanding why some people protest and others do not.

Discussions of land ownership and registration might seem arcane compared to other pressing issues faced by Jordanians during a time of economic crisis, mass

migration and regional instability. Land is one of what William Gallois (2017;16) has called ‘the banal details of the making of empire’ – but it is exactly this slow, structural force to land policy that makes it so important. To the degree that land has become a market commodity for sale and speculation, land has done so because of and through, not despite, these ambiguous relationships to the social.

To return to De Soto’s quote (2000:7) with which I began, many Jordanian Bedouin have ‘titles’ in the form of a *hijjah* to tribal lands even when not having full legal title even to their own communal family houses, while many Palestinian Jordanians in East Amman live on land whose title is ambiguous or contested. The royal house, far from trying to end this ambiguity, has made repeated use of it, managing different sectional interests, threatening or revoking the threat of seizure, and throughout preventing the full scale of land inequality and misappropriation from becoming clear. Creative ambiguity of this sort is not unique to Jordan, and perhaps is common to many places where capitalist markets seek to transform but also work through local realities.

The full impact of reforms may have been mitigated and re-socialised by practices ‘on the ground’, but this is not to suggest there has been no change; land has become a commodity and a source of wealth, and an arena in which social changes caused by the end of nomadic pastoralism are seen most clearly. I have suggested a historicised conception of land relations, tracing land ownership back through a series of reforms and transformations, each of which was partial, contested, resisted and self-contradictory, but which nevertheless left a mark. Land first became valuable property of a form of shaykhly manorialism or appanage under the late Ottoman ‘opening of the land’, before colonial and developmental efforts sought to transform it into an individual asset, subject to the market. Finally the colonial and post-colonial developmental desires for a nation of property-holding citizens, owner-occupiers and improvers, sitting on a meritocratic and equitable share of the nation, has given way to the more slippery logics of neoliberal capitalism espoused by the IMF, World Bank and others who have sought to influence Jordan’s economic policy. These efforts have brought about change, but not necessarily as intended. Land is wealth, but through speculation and urban sprawl, not cultivation and improvement. Land is also an area, according to many Jordanians, of a broken agreement with the royal house. In this context the long-term structural factors behind supposedly exceptional East-Banker protests in rural areas become clearer. The question of land, once settled, is becoming

unsettling. The consequences of this unsettlement will be a major theme in Chapter 6. For now though, in the next chapter, I return to the theme of land, Bedouin villages and political economy, through a specific material space; that of the *dīwān*, and particularly to the supposed centre of the Bani Sakhr socio-political category, and of much of the history outlined in this chapter: Um al-‘Amad. In examining this space, some of the problems of inequality and hierarchy among supposedly egalitarian Bedouin, arising from the long history of land settlement, supposed communal ownership, and shaykhly estate-building, come more clearly into focus.

4 IN AND OUT OF THE *DĪWĀN*: LOCATING HOSPITALITY, SOVEREIGNTY AND PUBLICS IN JORDAN

Driving between Madaba and Amman the main road passes through the village of Um al-‘Amad, a ribbon of gleaming, showy villas behind high walls, at the centre of which lies a crumbling but grand stone courtyard house and mosque-tomb, overshadowed by a vast new hall (Figures 4.1-4).¹ Affixed to the outer wall a plaque legible from the road proudly boasts ‘In the Name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate, The *dīwān* of Shaykh Mithqal al-Fayiz,’ along with the Qur’anic quote (3:103) ‘Hold on all together to the rope of God and do not become divided’ (Figure 4.4), highlighting valorised solidarity and group loyalty. Built in 1996 by the children and grandchildren of the famous ‘shaykh of shaykhs’ (see Yoav Alon’s 2016 biography), this place is grandly called in media sources ‘the gathering place of the Bani Sakhr tribes’, lying at the heart of the Fayiz lineage’s area of land ownership and socio-political influence, from which their vaguer claims to paramountcy within the Bani Sakhr radiate. The *de facto* head of the family is Mithqal’s grandson, former Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayiz, who along with other close descendants, use the *dīwān* for large gathering, meetings, public media appearances, hosting grand occasions and dispute resolutions of national political significance.

Here, it might seem, is a place where the awkward Dreschian terminology of ‘name/space category’ comes into its own; the ‘name’ (al-Fayiz, Bani Sakhr) and ‘space’ connect here through the operation of shaykhly power and prestigious

¹ Um al-‘Amad, ‘the mother of columns’ was one of the first villages developed by the Fayiz family in their late nineteenth century agricultural expansion, and was the centre of their main estate, as discussed in sections 5.2-5.3.

hospitality. This sense of centrality is misleading. These buildings lie empty most of the time, shunned by those who might be expected to see them as the concrete expression of meaningful categorical identification.

In this chapter I turn to the *dīwān* as an exemplary but disputed type of space in the social life of large areas of Jordan, where the most valourised forms of hospitality and interpersonal association are conducted between honourable subjects, following certain rules of guest/host interaction. It is a space intended to project an outward face to the house, to host and contain guests. It is therefore woven into Jordanian national imagery, from the eulogisation and commodification of *mansaf* and coffee (Wojnarowski and Williams 2020) to furnishings in office lobbies. While most remain associated with houses, Mithqal's *dīwān* is perhaps the largest and most extreme manifestation of a wider phenomenon of group *dīwān* building that has gripped Jordan in the last two decades, raising intriguing questions about the nature of political spaces and the role of hospitality in contemporary Jordan. This touches on the common (non)sense concepts of public, private and civil society. Anthropological and sociological engagement with these notions (Dunn and Hann 1996; Gellner 1994; Seligman 1995) largely turns on ideas of relationality, but often under-emphasise the role of power and elites in constructing these categories and reinforcing them in everyday life via bureaucratic and discursive infrastructure. Whether these powers are 'state-like' or 'state-dislike' (Scheele 2019a), defining and reproducing hospitable spaces is a key technique of sovereignty.

It is from post-colonial scholarship (influenced by the Foucauldian understanding of power) that growing awareness has emerged of the exercise of power involved in defining and delineating a domestic and private sphere. This work has shown the political nature of deferring practices and social schemata for the transmission of wealth between generations, houses, gendering and social reproduction to the private realm, especially in colonial contexts (Chakrabaty 1994, Stoller 2006). In these terms, Gellner's (1994) classic formulation, whereby human societies choose between the tyranny of kings and the tyranny of cousins, seems misleading.² In Jordan as in most times and spaces, kings rule though cousins, and the power of normatively defined gerontocratic familial patriarchies are sustained, reinforced and upheld by kings

² Gellner (1994) himself seems likely to have made the distinction as a thought experiment, recognising that in practice they intertwine. However, where his work is used to interpret 'modernity', the distinction between 'kinship societies' and true polities becomes starker than Gellner perhaps intended (see Macfarlane 2002).

and sovereigns, as they are in other settings by colonial rulers (Chakrabarty 1994). The *dīwān*, a space not open to a *general* public, but symbolically and practically distinct to varying degrees from domestic space, gives a particularly clear example of this entanglement. It is a space where hospitality, business and politics sit seamlessly, if sometimes uneasily together, where gendered hierarchies are enacted and sovereignty proclaimed and tested. While the term *dīwān* is borrowed in Jordan and throughout the Arab-speaking world by various types of governmental and putatively ‘civil society’ organisations, one imagines those who argue for ‘civil society’ as central to liberal modernity (Macfarlane 2002) did not have places like Mithqal’s *dīwān* in mind. In this chapter I analyse such connections, and how they relate and give form to the elements of my broader argument, on discourses of Bedouin identity and political economy in contemporary Jordan. I contend that the conceptual binary of public/private, while relevant to this context, obscures the multiple modalities of publicness and privateness that are claimed and contested in and out of the *dīwān*.

My interest in Mithqal’s compound in Um al-’Amad started after talking to the historian Yoav Alon about his visits in 2015. However, to many of my interlocutors it was a dead centre. ‘Why do you want to go, there is nothing there, it is empty’, ‘You can’t just visit, it is only used for occasions [*munāsibāt*]’ I was told by Rayan, the Fayiz I knew best. Whenever occasions came up for which it might be used a private venue was found instead. For some non-Fayiz Sukhur there was a marked reluctance to visit even the village, the centre to them not of the Bani Sakhr but of a history whose moral trajectory and message they did not agree with (see Section 2.1). Hind al-Fayiz, who broke with the wider al-Fayiz over her opposition politics, said that Um al-’Amad was a bad place and that she was not welcome at family gatherings there, and would refuse from principle to set foot in the *dīwān* of Mithqal. To my Dahamshah and Mutirāt friends, visiting Um al-’Amad, especially with a suspicious foreigner, was an unattractive prospect. We should not risk angering the powerful by poking around their property. Others, especially non-Sukhur, sought to deny the site any special significance at all. They told me the *dīwān* was just an empty room, the palace just an old house, but that I should be careful – the house and tombs were known to be haunted by Jinn.

I eventually visited alone, and after being accosted by a welcoming caretaker I was given a tour. The *dīwān* hall itself is marble-floored, supported by vast stone columns and big enough to seat over a thousand (Figure 4.3). Lavishly-framed portraits

of family members, in both suits and Arab dress, line the walls. In the centre, opposite the door on the south wall, hangs a portrait of Mithqal himself.

The old half-ruined house next door, widely called *qasr Mithqal* ('Mithqal's Palace') (Figure 4.1) and the mosque where Mithqal is buried were also named after him, the most famous Sukhur shaykh in Jordan,³ even though both were begun by his predecessors, Sattam and Fandi. It is telling that he is the emphasised exemplar; a figure not from the heroic age of shaykhs, the imagined time of violence and unbridled sovereignty, but a figure from the Mandate, the 'coming of the *duwala*'. Mithqal, as discussed a problematic figure for many, is often seen as the exemplary 'government shaykh', a man whose wealth and power were largely generated externally through mediating between the Government and his own 'people' who he claimed (often unrealistically) to represent and influence.⁴ Even his ancestors, the older al-Fayiz shaykhs, were as we saw in the last chapter, men rising to prominence in a new world of land settlement, agricultural expansion, and increasing and military imbalance between Bedouin and the state.

Figure 4.1: *Qasr Mithqal* ('Mithqal's Palace'), Um al-'Amad. Photograph by the author.



³ Rivalled only by Haditha Kraishah and perhaps among the Huwaītat 'Auda Abu Taya.

⁴ At several points during the *Ikhwan* raids in the late 1920s, Mithqal promised thousands of Bani Sakhr warriors to defend the Amirate, though only a handful ever materialised (Alon 2016, Jevon 2017).

Figure 4.2-4.4: Photographs by the author of *dīwān* Mithqal al-Fayiz showing (top left clockwise) main entrance at side, interior and front with dedicatory plaque visible from the road.



4.1 A Place for Hospitality

The term *dīwān* comes from a Middle-Persian word meaning a house of records or council chamber (Hayyim 1934) and in Arabic the term has associations with documentation, government, law and delivering justice. In this context however, *dīwān* refers to the semi-public guestrooms kept by shaykhs and other notables claiming influence and reputation. There are other Arabic terms used to describe a variety of guestrooms, but *dīwān* in Jordan at least seems the most common, as well as the most evocative and grand. The *dīwān* is the setting for enacting the most valourised expressions of hospitality, termed *karām*, a term that guests can use to flatter the host, but which hosts gracefully refuse to acknowledge. These are the sites of both business and instrumental meetings over matters of money, law and politics, and social events, although distinctions of this sort rarely stand up to scrutiny. They are usually either

attached to private houses (either a room within them or a separate building or tent nearby), and are associated with that house and its owner. The communal *dīwān*, shared by and named after an '*ashīrah* is largely a new form.

The largest and most important *dawāwīn* (plural) are kept open regularly to receive various (often unexpected) visitors, who come and go to ask favours, seek advice or just to meet with friends while enjoying the owner's hospitality through coffee, tea, tobacco and sometimes food. Tied-up with the materiality of the *dīwān* is the taste and smell of *gahwah sa'adah* (unsweetened cardamom-spiced black coffee, served in small cups), and at the greatest occasions *mansaf* (meat stewed in a fermented curd broth); substances that perform the role of 'bread and salt' ('*aīsh wa milih*).⁵ Through these practices of hospitality hosts extend the offer of protection (figurative and literal) to their guests, and in accepting this the guest submits to the sovereignty of the host. Such resonances evoke the atmosphere of intimate formality that is central to the *dīwān*.

Overtly legal business, such as making agreements over land or marriage and even negotiating a truce after a slight or revenge attack are often held in the margins of social occasions. The more overtly social events include both casual visits from those for whom the intimacy of the inner house would be inappropriate as well as formal occasions, *munāsibāt*: weddings, funeral receptions (for several days visitors will come to drink coffee and offer set funerary phrases), graduation, retirement and engagement parties. Men will use the *dīwān* for these *munāsibāt*, while women often use either a partitioned section or most frequently in contemporary practice, a separate guestroom. Jordanian Bedouin men are often involved in circles of reciprocal feasting, '*azaym* (literally 'inviting'), where a group of perhaps twenty or more older men take it in turns to host all the others at their house for a large formal meal, normally a *mansaf*, involving killing and cooking a sheep or goat (Wojnarowski and Williams 2020). Such invitations are often said to be a matter of duty, *wajib*, not *karām*, because reciprocation is explicit, but hosts will try to outdo each other, serving more and better food than expected, to gain a reputation.

For my younger interlocutors, even though the importance of such settings was widely acknowledged, the practices of serving older kin and guests, sitting quietly learning long, complicated histories and genealogies seemed unappealing. Yet these

⁵ Widely used across Eurasia as a motif of accord and protection between host and guest (Smith and Christian 1984).

were exactly the spaces I was referred to when I asked questions that fitted with my interlocutor's notions of a *dīwān*-centric discourse – questions about history, leadership, law and land ownership. I needed to listen to the talk of old men who could be visited, if the proper introductions were obtained, at their *dīwān*. I should learn via my position as guest, given knowledge as part of the formal presentation of hospitality.

In one interview with Ghazi Abu Qa'ūd, an older man belonging to a shaykhly '*ashīrah* in the small and remote village of ad-Dīr in Jabal Bani Hamida who had recently built a new guestroom (Figure 4.5), my wife and I praised his young grandchildren for their manners. He tutted and said they were not learning as he had when their age as they did not want to sit, learn and serve. He told us that serving in the *dīwān* had been the main way children learned when he was growing up, picking up stories, poetry and knowledge of local personages and politics, but perhaps most importantly 'knowing how to serve guests'.

Hosts, Ghazi said, must be attentive to guests, preventing them from needing to lift a finger, while guests must not wander about or show curiosity about the host's household, making polite general compliments but not complimenting anything

Figure 4.5: Ghazi Abu Qa'ūd shows off his newly-built *dīwān* with pride (requesting that we send him the photo by WhatsApp). Photograph by Jennie Williams.

Image Redacted

excessively. Guests should first refuse and then only accept a little of whatever food and drink is offered; a modesty the host must be at pains to overcome with frequent invitations to eat more, to take another cup of coffee, to stay a little longer. To act as a host is in a sense ‘a display of mastery’ (Shryock 2012:S25) which, as with all forms of mastery, must be learned.

The aesthetics of these settings vary along a spectrum of furnishings, from those considered most ‘traditional’ (*taqlīdy*), involving rugs or mats on the floor, low mattresses and cushions or camel saddles to recline against, to those considered most ‘Western’ (*bishakal amrīky*) or ‘contemporary’ (*‘asry*), with long sofas, arm chairs and coffee tables (see Figures 4.6-4.9). Large communal versions often involve rows of stackable chairs for convenience. However there are common tendencies. The conceptual origin of such spaces in the minds of their users tends to be the *baīt sha’ar*, the goat-hair tent, basic plan has become more elaborate and varied when translated into permanent form.⁶

The basic form is a large rectangular hall, entered from the long side (the entrance previously being on the most sheltered side), with a central area or table to serve coffee or tea and display coffee paraphernalia, often to the left of the entrance referencing the position in the tent original of a hearth, brazier or fire-pit for preparing tea and coffee. Seating is around the edges and sometimes there is a central pillar (*mu’amad*) from which weapons and head-dresses may be hung. The tent as a residence is generally divided into a *raba’a* or *shigg*, the public area for hospitality and men (but where women may sometimes host), and the *muḥaram* for women and domestic tasks, as well as sleeping. Where a tent is used exclusively as a *dīwān* it is not so divided, and larger houses may have a variety of reception rooms; a family living room, a formal *dīwān*-like room for female guests (Figure 4.6), and a private women’s room. A *dallah*, a tall tapering coffeepot and other coffee regalia will usually be on display, with Qur’anic verses, daggers, and sometimes poetry on the walls, as well as formal pictures of the primary owner, his ancestors, and perhaps the king. The more formal the aesthetic, the less personal memorabilia on display – these spaces are inherently outwards facing.

⁶ This particular imagined genealogy, however, should not hide the fact that permanent houses are not, as Layne (1994) makes clear, tents-made-stone. They follow their own logic.

Figure 4.6: The women's guestroom in Saif Dahamshah's house in Um al-Walid. Photograph by Fenella Wojnarowska.



Figures 4.7 - 4.9: The *dīwān* of Hamīd bin Lufān ash-Shammary in Madaba in a studied and stylised replica Bedouin Tent. On the left, the north end of the tent features a *mu'amad* (central pillar), riding accoutrements, a satellite TV, and a picture in the centre of his grandfather. On the right, the south end of the tent features an antique-looking but conveniently modern gas-powered coffee-making station, presided over by Ahmed the Iraqi cousin and *gahwaji*. Below, the owner-host presides in the centre of the tent opposite the entrance, flanked by one of his own poems and a tapestry of the king. Photographs by the author.



Image Redacted

Image Redacted

A more formal *dīwān* will have a thermos of coffee present to receive guests, who should be served on arrival, in order of age and status, often by a son of the host. The bitter coffee is poured out in tiny quantities and offered to the guest (after checking the temperature – lukewarm coffee is an insult), who will say ‘*aysht*’ on receiving the coffee, will swirl and smell it before drinking it quickly to free up the cup for the next guest. When finished, the guest shakes the cup or covers it with a hand to indicate they don’t want any more.⁷ The guest hands back the coffee cup, saying *daīman*, ‘always,’ indicating they are satisfied, and they hope that it may always be so, that the host will always be in a position to provide hospitality and they to enjoy it. Coffee is generally followed by sweetened black tea and sweets, dates and fruit proffered at frequent intervals.

Dawāwīn are not supposed to be places where one is at ease, despite the constant utterances from hosts to the contrary, for guests to sit, to recline, and to be comfortable. The relationship between host and guest is always one of care, verging on anxiety, as the careful negotiation of hospitality is demanding. They are spaces adapted to dealing with the problem of strangers and outsiders, partially incorporating them via hospitality and commensality as guests and thus instilling within them a certain subjectivity *vis-a-vis* the host. Life in the *Bādīyah* hinterland for men of standing was one of movement and fluidity, necessitating travel and interactions with socially distant and even unknown others, with inherent dangers.⁸ The inviolability of homes (*hūrmat al-baīt*) and especially the female kin dwelling within, remain central to honour (*sharaf*) and its corollary, the vulnerable sexual honour of women, ‘*ird*. However *sharaf* and maintaining a reputation as *muhtrim* (‘respectable/genteel) and becoming *m’aruf* (known) involves interacting with various degrees of other, in areas historically without the developed public institutions of mosque and *suq*. The political dynamic of the area now Jordan until the recent past favoured a quite different type of social and political space to these urban institutions – not one of public equality but of sovereignty. The space of hospitality, within and yet outside the inviolable home solves this problem. As Shryock (2012:S24) puts it:

⁷ In the past, it was considered necessary to drink three cups to accord guest-rights to a visitor but now one cup is often all that is expected or offered. The third of these, the *gahwah as-saif* ‘coffee of the sword’ was considered to create a binding relationship of protection and accord between host and guest while they sat together, and was only drunk in cases of dispute when a resolution had been agreed upon.

⁸ Judith Scheele (2019b:199) states ‘hospitality was often the best way of dealing with potentially harmful strangers’, writing of a geographically distant but in some respects related and comparable setting of village guest-rooms in the trade-reliant societies of the Sahara.

When a Jordanian says; 'My house is your house', he does not mean all of it. He means that part of it which forms the stage for hospitality. Here, everything is or becomes a prop. even the poorest Bedouin, still living in a tent or a two-room cinderblock house, will be able to create the hospitable effect by means of language and a deft manipulation of space.

This analysis turns on hospitality as a kind of totalising space, combining political, moral, ethical and material elements and practices, and imposing roles on participants. The role of guest and host (*daīf wa mudaīyf/mu'azzab*), establish mutual obligations and relative status. Hospitality can make or break reputations for both, though especially for hosts, through the normative power of gossip. A popular Bedouin proverb states *lazim al-mu'azzib yikhaf min al-daīf. Luma yig'ad huwa daīf; luma yigum huwa sha'ir* (the host must fear the guest: when he sits he's a guest; when he stands he's a poet).

Given the 'thickness' of this space and the relations within it, the relative paucity of anthropological theoretical interest in hospitality relationships with and beyond the region until recently is perhaps surprising.⁹ There has been a recent surge in anthropological literature on hospitality, indeed almost a 'turn' towards it as a topic and theoretical comparative concept. Candea and Da Col's (2012) influential article presented the provocative hypothetical of where anthropology might be if Mauss (1924) had taken hospitality as his subject rather than gift exchange. They call for greater theoretical and ethnographic attention to hospitality as a form of 'cosmopolitics' (2012:S15) with unusual scalar properties, allowing conceptual movement between ethnographic particularity and universal cosmological description.¹⁰

Ethnography coming out of the Middle East and Jordan (perhaps unusually) has been at the forefront of this discussion, in some respects driving wider disciplinary theoretical developments (see Shryock 2004, 2008, 2012, 2019; Hughes 2018, 2019; Sheldon 2017). Much of this work retouches upon ideas once associated with largely superseded Mediterraneanist and segmentary theory discussed in Chapter 2, such as the idea of Arab 'tribalism' as 'moral reciprocity that turns on protection' (Dresch

⁹ This neglect, perhaps a result of anthropologists' bravado about getting beyond guest-status and into 'real' intimacy, has not occurred in philosophy, especially work on Kant and Derrida (Shryock 2008). Anthropologists have always experienced, made use of and described hospitality, but have tended at the level of analysis to prefer, for instance, exchange, intimacy, and the narrower category of feasting, breaking hospitality down into its constituent parts, or else lumping it together into wider cultural systems like gift exchange.

¹⁰ They also suggest a reconstructed genealogy (via Pitt-Rivers, Ortner, Munn and Herzfeld) to accomplish this.

1990:255).¹¹ Dresch drew attention to the way he felt in certain contexts within the Arabic-speaking Middle East (and presumably in many places and contexts beyond it), Mauss's notion of the atemporal and socially-conscious exchange generated by the compulsion to give, receive and reciprocate comes up against tendencies towards irregular exchange, hoarding, autonomy and occasional self-destructive generosity (Dresch 1998) which Shryock (2019b) calls 'keeping to oneself'.

There is much to be gained from engaging with this theoretical (re)turn. But it tends, like 'the gift' that it is patterned on, to privilege exchange. In terms of my argument about central Jordanian Bedouin *dawāwīn*, there are two obvious reservations to applying this logic. Firstly, using such a logic tends to involve losing sight of the materiality of hospitality: the foods, drinks, utensils and physical practices of commensality that produce, mark and contest hospitality in practice. These are, I argue, far more than mere props – the taste and feel of hospitality are connected to historical, geographical and economic factors, which have experiential consequences and deep resonances for guests and hosts.

Secondly, it suggests the teleology of hospitality is based on transaction, while as we have seen the performance of the *roles* of host and guest, and the asymmetries between them seem emphasised in this case. David Sneath (2019:67) argues that in his field site:

Mongolian everyday hospitality can be seen to be enactional, rather than transactional; its practices are materializations of the roles of host and guest ... [it] does not imply acts of generosity directed towards any particular person; it is an expression of the status of the householders and their ability to fulfil a public norm...

and that often supposedly 'popular' or nationalised forms of hospitality are modified versions of older codes of behaviour associated with nobles, thus those unable to enact the role of host properly are necessarily excluded from this most valourised form of sociality. I was told by many, including both my old language teacher Samer and my Madaba Christian friend Isam that hospitality was really 'a Bedouin thing' (*ishy badawy*) which other Arabs had adopted or maintained since settling. Real *karām* was a value of shaykhs and noble lineages; others were, in a sense, borrowing the form to

¹¹ Dresch (2012) later worked on Yemeni escort-codes on the offering and granting of protection, themes which implicitly rely on notions of hospitality.

make a claim.¹² The eagerness of young men without their own house to try to pay for each other in coffeeshops and cheap food places in town, is in some ways an attempt to become a host in a time of blocked social reproduction (an idea I return to in Chapter 3). To fail to perform hospitality, or to do so poorly, is thus in both Mongolia and Jordan a serious matter.

The affect of hospitality is reproduced at the level of discourse and state imaginary via the metaphor of the royal house presiding over Jordan-as-house. As seen in the last chapter's discussion of moral economies, even those who wish to resist the royal house do so within this discourse of hospitality; as in Hind's speech, they seek to reverse the roles so that they as Bedouin East-Bankers become the hosts, and the Hashemites the guests. In this discourse, development can take on many of the properties of *karām*. Shaykhs in Jordan now are often the local stakeholders consulted by international, national and local development projects, and as such continue to take on a representative role.¹³ Shryock (2004:37) states that *karām* communicates a message of 'privileged inclusion and (no less pronounced) a feeling of precise containment'. It is this very ambiguity between honoured citizen and indulged but marginalised objects of nation-making that characterise the Bedouin experience of being sedenterised and developed in Jordan. Hospitality, as Lancaster (1995) and others argued, was a key way by which Bedouins could survive individual hardships, and of meeting needs for food, lodging and security, and so by instead taking over this humanitarian duty (which Alon (2009) argues, was the deliberate policy of Glubb Basha and the British during the famine of 1931), the Government bolsters its own authority, encompassing that of the shaykhly (former) elite. No wonder then that the state has appropriated the coffeepot as the symbol of *karām* as a national symbol, even while undermining the very resonance of that symbol, by bringing hospitality into a commercial zone where its values are reversed. Nippa (in Chatty 2006:550), asserts that 'an act of hospitality is an act of pacification'.

¹² The quote from Shryock (2012: S24) hints at this; 'even the poorest Bedouin... will be able to create the hospitable *effect*' (emphasis added).

¹³ In my Masters fieldwork, I examined the way shaykhs and their vision of their social environment dominated in efforts to gain UNESCO and UNDP recognition as indigenous people possessing 'masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage' (see also Bille 2012, Chatelard 2005). I also analysed a community development NGO in the West Bank working with the Rashayda Bedouin, which had tried to include women as stakeholders, but fearing losing community support, had ended up only interviewing the hereditary *mukhtar* of each village, a tendency to prioritise the shaykh's-eye view I had to constantly work hard to avoid repeating.

4.2 A Protected Space and a Test of Sovereignty

The *dīwān* is a space under the protection of its owner as the host, and as such he is answerable for both the safety and wellbeing of guests within it, but also for their behaviour, including with each other. Guests are supposed to remain polite, contented and, most importantly, passive: not lifting a figure or wandering around the house at will. They should also refrain from insulting the host or breaking his guarantee of protection by insulting or attacking other guests. As such the claim of protection in hosting is also a claim to a form of sovereignty (if often temporary and reversible) over the guests. This is a claim that can be put to the test.

While the discursive deployment of hospitality, and coffee as its metonym, seeks to tame and appropriate these symbols to stand for amity, national unity and obedience to central authority, this meaning sits uneasily with others. Candea and da Col (2012:9) draw attention to ‘a pivotal asymmetry between hosts and guests’, and the potential for hospitality and commensality to collapse into their opposites; violence, predation and discord. The most ethnographically obvious concern with formal hospitality I encountered was with gossip and reputation about people who had done hospitality ‘wrong’, but this can have larger political significance. Shryock (2012, 2019) explores, historical narratives of the changing power and status of lineages and alliances tend to pivot on hospitality gone wrong, where it is refused, guests refuse to visit, or worst of all where hosts attack guests or guests hosts. Such accounts, Shryock argues, contain both the idea that hospitality is the venue for political change and contestations, and that it is a moral virtue that transcends the political, providing moral examples of what good and bad hospitality is. In my account of oral historical narratives in Chapters 2 of the rise of the Fayiz lineage from an orphan adopted by the ‘old man Dahamshah’ in the deserts of Hijaz, there is also a sense of the host or patron, of the protection of a host in taking in an exile being confounded. In Saif’s narrative, the change came when al-Fayiz did not come to eat with his benefactor, claiming sickness, and later holding a feast himself. Again, it is through a refusal of hospitality that al-Fayiz rejects the sovereignty of another and claims his own.

The idea that food can be used to instil bodily dispositions is a widespread one, but has particular currency in Arabic; the popular aphorism ‘*t’amy ath-thum istahy al-‘ayn*’ (feed the mouth and the eye is bashful) expresses the idea that challenging and disrespectful gazes can be turned aside through displays of food and hospitality. However, the potential to generate shared subjectivity, and thus acquiescence, can also

create hierarchy; the powerful can turn away the gazes of the weak, turning guests into clients or even vassals.

The asymmetrical, hierarchical, and dangerous nature of enacting hospitality is also why it is such a potent political gesture. Shryock (2012: S20) states;

Hospitality, karam in local dialect, is not simply a matter of offering tea, cigarettes, and pleasant conversation to guests. It is also a test of sovereignty. The man who is karim (hospitable, generous, noble) is able to feed others, project an honourable and enviable reputation, and protect guests from harm. Hospitality, as Bedouin describe it, is a quality of persons and households, of tribal and ethnic groups, and even of nation-states. At any of these levels of significance, failure to provide karam suggests low character and weakness, qualities that attract moral criticism.

I have argued throughout that Bedouin shaykhs, and those pursuing influence, seek to articulate a representational claim to sovereignty. This claim is based on the figure of the patron, the host, capable of representing other's interests and speaking for them in a wider world, and thus encompassing and protecting their own reputations. Hosts are not just metaphors for patrons, they are one of the main ways patronage is enacted.

In Meeker's (2002) description of coffeehouse publics in north-eastern Turkey younger men of a lineage leave conversations when their fathers or uncles enter, as to do otherwise would be to challenge the right of these men to represent the lineage in the 'public' sphere, and to stay and join in the conversation would be to challenge this representational claim and to put forward a counterclaim of independent sovereignty. In Madaba too, young men avoid contradicting older men, especially kin, and so will often avoid them socially. Meeker stresses that such practices grow out of and in many ways mirror the salons of local dignitaries, which impose similar 'normative performances of interpersonal association' (2002:344) on those taking part. So too, the age and gender hierarchies of the *dīwān* reinforce the host's authority, which rests on a claim to representation as both spokesperson and exemplar. As such dependants and younger lineage-members must marginalise themselves, making such spaces at once uncomfortable and peripheral to the lives of many of my interlocutors. Meeker (2002:347) argues this is not a case of the political reflecting the domestic;

Older men did not have the privilege... as a consequence of family or household structure. Distinctions of gender and age were rooted in public

life, and these distinctions in turn had an impact on family and household structure.

This connects with Meeker's wider points that I have already discussed in Section 2.1: 'tribal' leaders make tribes, not the other way around, and that such leaders often sit within wider imperial tactics of sovereign power exercised through interpersonal association. This interpersonality involves is not just between public or political persons, but is entangled with their domestic lives. The *dīwān* shows both that notions of a public is in play here, but also that it is inseparable from the private and domestic; existing as an outwards-looking face on house (using the term in the anthropological sense of a social unit as well as a structure) which includes sliding degrees of intimacy, protection and privateness, encompassing various forms of inside and outside.

Many in Jordan question whether shaykhs still have a future role to play, yet the owners of a *dīwān* (a far wider group of people) at every level serve as gate-keepers to real or claimed contact-networks, and as such act as intermediaries, mediating between different scales of sovereignty. Ibrahim, Marwan's father (the seller of *hijjah* described in the preceding Chapter), is not of a shaykhly lineage, nor is he especially rich. However as a senior army officer, the first thing he did on retiring was open a *dīwān* and start offering help among his circle to get military and administrative jobs for their children. In return, grateful clients have helped him in his business dealings, allowing him to invest in a factory, and find a teaching job for his academically able middle son. In a more sinister example of this importance, the *Mukhabarāt*, Jordan's intelligence community, regularly monitor comings and goings at important *dawāwīn*, and visits to those of certain key restive '*ashā'ir* are enough.

4.3 Which Public?: communality, exclusivity and civil society

The descriptions of hospitality and sovereignty as practice and discourse above rest upon the exemplary case of the *dīwān* of an individual, attached to a family home. However Mithqal's *dīwān* is one of many in a new trend of communal *dawāwīn*. These new structures have sprung up over the last three decades across Jordan resembling and sometimes doubling as rental halls and private clubs. They do not bear the name of a central personage but of a broader category – most often an '*ashīrah*, advertised via a large sign.

The building of communally owned *dawāwīn* is one solution to the problem of growing networks and rising costs to hospitality. Built and operated either informally or

through cooperative or charity law, these are funded and managed not by a socially significant individual but by a committee.¹⁴ Such depersonalised spaces are problematic and many questions remain sources of contention: who is the host? who the guest? who has the right to use the space when and for what? The keys of *dīwān* Mithqal rested with the paid caretaker for this reason (although it was rumoured others had sets). The feelings of respectful anxiety and deference, described above, lack a clear direction in these spaces, and the host's admonishments to 'be at home', always somewhat rhetoric, seem especially flat and empty. The increasing use of commercial rental halls (called *sālah*) and even of hotels and restaurants for rich urbanites, is both easier and in some cases cheaper, but fraught with other social and reputational risks.

The move to communal hospitality in times of economic hardship coincides with the rise of the family association (Baylouny 2006, discussed in section 2.1). Baylouny (2006:362-363) states that;

in their conceptualisation of kinship as the idiom of solidarity...the most consequential effect of the family associations has been to reinforce the declining significance of the national political arena. ... Devolving welfare provision onto kin associations fragments civil society into particularistic blocks and prevents unified demands along economic lines'.

In Bedouin areas and around Madaba such formalised and committee-run associations are both rarer and smaller than in cities, but still present. There is however a profusion of smaller and cooperative ownership contracts for families, such as that by which the Dahamshah brothers co-owned their houses and car. Crucially this type of association contract, based in charity law, are also the vehicles often used for owning a communal *dīwān*.

As already hinted, my interest in communal *dawāwīn*, and why they came to be built was not usually shared by my young interlocutors. I usually found that only their fathers and grandfathers were particularly enthusiastic to talk to me in detail about such things. Younger people treated them with little more enthusiasm than youths in Britain for village halls.¹⁵ There were at least five communal *dawāwīn* I knew of in the vicinity of Madaba but they were rarely pointed out to me as landmarks, unlike mosques, shops,

¹⁴ This arrangement has some historical precedent in the region. Urban guesthouses (*madāfa*) in towns like as-Salt were commonly co-funded by a large family (Antoun 2000).

¹⁵ The hall in the British context has a partially parallel history in that it went from the public-facing part of the private residence of a noble or important figure, to an overtly public space, via guild halls and church halls to village and parish halls (Thompson 1995).

cafes and houses of notable individuals. The only exception was on the road outside Madaba to the village of Faysaliah when we went past a blackened fire-damaged small hall advertising itself as the *dīwān* of the Habūsh, a small sub-category associated with the Ajarmah '*ashīrah*, which was only noteworthy as a source of speculation about the nature of the revenge attack that had seen it burned. The *dīwān* of a notable local is a place where one can visit and expect at the least tea, coffee and conversation. A communal *dīwān* will likely be locked, the key not to hand and difficult to acquire. On an occasion that I did attend a funerary reception in such a place my Salaytah friend Salah asked me what I thought of it. I responded with something non-committal to the effect that they had put on a good show. Yes, he agreed, but a shame they were not rich enough to hold it at home. It was not the same in a place like this. The family, he felt, could not really 'host' (*istadaīf*).

Given this lack of enthusiasm for them, the obvious question is why they were built. The reason generally given by my interlocutors was economic. Few now could afford or had space for a *dīwān* capable of hosting all those they might be expected to host during important occasions, as the genealogically-significant *khamsat ad-dam* grows exponentially. A large, hired tent is the solution for many, but this is still expensive, and as land prices rise and urban areas expand, spaces to erect them decrease.¹⁶ Instead, costs can be shared over many families, who can then, theoretically, host on an equal footing.

Cost-sharing is not the only reason for building them, however. They are also a powerful public statement; claiming a public face for a name/space category, and a claim on the part of the builders to being centrally important to that name. Normally a private *dīwān* is set behind walls or planting within a family compound, and has no sort of signposting or inscription (occasionally at most areligious phrase and the builder's name). In contrast it is common for a communal *dīwān* to have a bold public façade, displaying a prominent sign declaring it to be the property of an '*ashīrah* or other sub-category. Often, as we have seen, local government reforms have allowed '*ashā'ir* to monopolise municipal authorities and even to give them their names. In such an environment, the *dīwān* comes to act as a symbol of local control and influence, even as it is depoliticised. Yet this symbolic role, while sometimes referred to (and demonstrated in the above example of the burning of a communal *dīwān* during a

¹⁶ In Amman it is common to see wedding tents on empty or derelict plots or even on wide but dusty verges.

dispute), is not reproduced in practice, as we have seen. They are social venues of last resort, locked up and subject to endless uncertainties over who has a right to use the space for what. Shryock (2004:52) in his description of the ‘Uwāīdi family’s decision to build a communal *dīwān* in Sawaya in 1995 described how his own hopes of finding a clear display of sovereignty and of politics in practice were frustrated as he realised ‘No one, it seems, quite knows how to make it work. Everyone owns it, so no one owns it’. Shryock (*ibid*:52-53) admits he was stymied in his aim ‘to portray *dīwān*-building as an alternative form of “civil society,” as an attempt to organize public space by means of kinship ties and hospitality.’

The link to the notion of ‘civil society’ was one already pursued by the Lebanese-American anthropologist Richard Antoun in the 1960s in his fieldwork in northern Jordan. Antoun (1965, 2000) was interested in making direct comparison to social theory around ‘civil society’, seeing in what he termed ‘village clans’ and their guesthouses, and in particular the processes of dispute resolution discussed in Chapter 2, an alternative to classic formations of civil society as public non-state spaces, and instead focusing on their role as intermediary political spaces. He states (Antoun 2000:442);

Civil Society is constituted by universal processes of trust and cooperation that have separate inflections in different cultures... the inflection in Jordan and other tribal cultures in the Middle East is the process of consensual, ad hoc conflict resolution within the context of wide-ranging social networks ... [and] processes of a civil society form a seamless web with state processes rather than a sharp dichotomy with them.

For Massad (as Watkins 2014:34) argues), Antoun’s focus on the small-scale localised processes within a bounded village community obscures the role of the colonial and post-colonial state in producing a category of ‘tribal’. A valid criticism, it misses Antoun’s own rejection of a ‘sharp dichotomy’ between state and tribe.

The political implications of notions public and private as they pertain to ‘civil society’ also resist sharp dichotomisation. On the one hand, the more public, ostentatious communal *dīwān* – a demonstration of sovereignty open to the road – remains strangely peripheral to everyday politics, even while becoming a political symbol. On the other, the ‘private’ *dīwān*, despite their symbolic sense of being part of the ‘house’ buzz with friends, clients, and the bored who can find an excuse to visit, to talk, ask for advice or favours, and take part in everyday politics.

There is an irony that these spaces thrive in part because they are *de-jure* apolitical. The documents of incorporation for communal *dawāwīn* usually explicitly ban their use for political meetings or electoral campaigning. The state has cracked down on other forms of public organisation and mobilisation, permitting ever fewer forms of group and throwing up barriers to registration for new ones, including unions and even sports clubs. The state meanwhile permits and indeed tacitly encourages family associations, communal ownership and association at the level of *‘ashīrah* and in various ways reinforces an infrastructural reality to tribal visions of society, as we have seen. In doing so, it seeks to rigorously portray the tribal sphere as apolitical, traditional, loyal and quietist; a pillar of support. So far, so typical of how states, especially authoritarian ones, make use of ‘civil society actors’ (see Clark 2015). It is no surprise that development literature and English-language pro-government publications increasingly refer to individual shaykhs or members of shaykhly lineage blandly as ‘community leaders’ while only a couple of decades before in English they were ‘tribal chiefs’. The writers of such reports seem unable to avoid referring to them at all due to their political heft, but are keen to find a way of naturalising and explaining away this influence without dwelling on its problematic, seemingly premodern, hierarchical overtones.¹⁷ The ‘civil society’ label has the potential both to render modern and developmental, but also to defang such leaders. Yet the ‘tribal’ is rarely fully successfully placed within the brackets of ‘community’ or ‘civil society’, just as the *dāwān* is never solely emptied of politics, even when only of the most everyday sort. Shryock (2004:39) summarises the importance of this type of sociality in a way that explicitly rejects this conflation with civil society;

More so than the mass media or the embryonic realm of “civil society” — which are effectively controlled by the state—feasts, visits, and the “standing invitations” of prominent households are contexts in which Jordanians can discuss current affairs, do business, argue history, communicate with leaders, build reputations, resolve (or rejuvenate) disputes, and otherwise renegotiate the boundaries between market, government, and society, subjecting these domains to the logic of karam.

¹⁷ See for instance Jordan Times (2015) where Jamal Khraisha, of one of the main Sukkur shaykhly lineages, is described as meeting with and advising the king as a ‘local community leader’ for his domain.

The vitality, symbolic resonance and political relevance of the ‘private’ *dīwān*, as a space where mediation and representation of an intensely political nature can take place, is opposed here to an anaemic and muzzled world of officially sanctioned civil society, which to some degree might include official associations such as those which allow the construction and operation of a communal *dīwān*. Yet though a profoundly political space, the central imaginary of the nation, as a house and as made up of houses and families, of nested and encompassed protected domestic spaces and lineages, necessitates its coexistence with the private *dīwān*.

The multi-scalar nature of this type of political space, spanning from the house to the nation might seem to place it squarely within definitions of ‘civil society’ (for instance Seligman 1995). Yet the associations with ideas of kinship generally defer it to a zone of lack or weakness in ‘civil society’, a deficient reflection or shadow. Rather at most the Arab ‘*ashīrah*’ can be cast as the organic and proto form from which ‘real’ civil society emerges, the ‘community’ – as shown in the tendency to rebrand tribes and shaykhs as ‘communities’ and ‘community leaders’. Numerous reports from development organisations and thinktanks writing in or on Jordan consider where ‘civil society’ might be found, and how it might be strengthened or turned to serve developmental purposes (El Said and Harrington 2009). Civil society’s weakness and absence is bemoaned as a causal factor for instability and authoritarianism in the region (which from a historical or anthropological perspective seem far more to do with imperial and colonial histories than innate regional tendencies), and yet the power of non-state actors, from the Muslim Brotherhood to ‘tribes’ is almost always seen as a security threat.

As an example, the neoconservative British thinktank the Henry Jackson Society’s report on the Arab Spring in Jordan (Libdeh 2012) concludes that reforms fell short of the demands of ‘civil society actors’ at one point, only to state at another that the Muslim Brotherhood, via its political wing the Islamic Action Front (IAF) has benefited from the near-absence of these same ‘civil society actors’. The Muslim Brotherhood itself is thus implicitly excluded from being a ‘civil society actor’ however much its activities may resemble what in other contexts analysts call ‘civil society’. Likewise ‘Tribes’, it states, have persisted because of the absence of other forms of civil society.

The *legitimate* actors in this civil society space are then by definition not ‘Islamic’ or ‘tribal’. Rather they are the very small number of permitted and approved

institutions, charities, societies and clubs allowed to exist in a highly circumscribed political environment, almost always via a royal patron. The Jordanian Women's Union, for instance, is often described in development organisation literature as a civil society feminist organisation, but was founded and still relies upon the patronage of a female member of the royal family, and avoids campaigning on issues which could cause its patron embarrassment, and so cannot hold the Government to account in any serious way (UN Women 2017). As Chatty (2000) points out, both conservative and socialist revolutionary regimes have since the 1970s shared an antipathy towards allowing women to mobilise independently from the state and its patriarchal oversight.

The *dīwān* is deeply implicated in the binary of public/private, a distinction significant in local idiom as well as academic discussions of modernisation theory, but in different ways. In Arabic the political associations of public and private differ and have their own historical genealogy, with distinctive hierarchical elements.¹⁸ The use of the binary to describe government/non-government spheres is largely a Euro-American political terminology, but as discussed earlier, the conflation of West-Banker/private versus East-Banker/public sector has gained widespread traction. Thus, although this distinction in daily speech between *khāss* and *amm* (used for such mundane distinctions as private or public parking) seems beguilingly close to English private and public respectively, its associations are sometimes different. In European but particularly in the former Ottoman lands the seat of power is associated with seclusion, secrecy and intimacy rather than public ostentation and visibility.¹⁹ The gaze of the sovereign may penetrate one's own privacy but cannot be returned except through invitation to intimacy, and then in a carefully controlled way. In this environment, intimacy and rank are symbolically enacted through the degree to which one may pass into the private sphere of the powerful. To afford a set on which to enact the formal intimacy of 'private' hospitality is itself a powerful statement. This conceptual genealogy, I suggest

¹⁸ The historian Ira Lapidus (1984) draws attention to how this distinction came in the Mamluk Sultanate to describe socio-political and hierarchical relationships; *al-khassa*, the 'private ones', came to be associated with the Mamluk elite in the major Egyptian and Syrian cities, while *al-amma* – 'the public' referred to subjects. Privateness, and an ability to maintain it, remained in many cities something associated with the governing elite in the Ottoman period. Lapidus makes clear that in practice which category particular groups were placed within was dependent on context and the perspective of the writer; for instance soldiers below the officer corps, non-Mamluk soldiers, and the religious, judicial antibureaucratic elite of the *Ulama* religious scholars could sometimes be described as *al-khassa* and sometimes as *al-amma*.

¹⁹ Meeker (2002) discusses this in a phenomenological account of the Ottoman palace of Topkapı Sarayı; visibility and publicness is carefully controlled and rationed; the gaze of the sultan simultaneously ever-suggested through towers, windows and lattice screens, but withdrawn and invisible to all but those closest to power.

lies behind the state encompassment of but also respect for, the private *dīwān*, and for the particular type of exclusive (private?) public it assembles.

To be invited into the *dīwān* is to enter more than a formal or transactional relationship with the owner, as one might in an office or coffeehouse. It is to become (or enact the role of) a guest. Rather than a rigid public/private binary *per se*, the significant distinction or variable at play here is the size of public, and therefore the degree of intimacy or private-ness, in question. Even though economically many are being priced out of the ability to create their own constituent public sphere through hospitality, the number of private *dīwān* is still rising, and as a cultural form its influence has seeped into a wider social milieu. Several interlocutors, when discussing the nature of contemporary leadership, mentioned that more people now called their guestroom a ‘*dīwān*’ than would have in the past, when terms still used today such as *ghurfat daīf* – ‘guestroom’, *ghurfat istaqbal* – ‘welcoming’ or ‘receiving room’ or for a grander more formal room *salah* were favoured. To use the term *dīwān* suggests more than just private hospitality, but specifically draws attention to the potentially-*political* nature of such hospitality, that what goes on in such a space is in a sense to do with reputation and influence. It suggests at once the separation of the private domestic sphere and the public face, but also their inseparability. The *dīwān*, like the house and the mosque, but unlike the office or shop, is somewhere you remove your shoes before entering. ‘Every house is a *diwan*’ these days, Shryock (2004:54) is told by those who criticise the arrogance but also stinginess of the new collective versions. It mirrors the common phrase I heard ‘every man is a shaykh of his family’. In both cases, the domestic, via the symbol of the house, is both a reflection and the discursive exemplar of the public political realm, and thus also reproducing and reliant on the gendered and age-based hierarchies of the house.

An ethnographic example of how public politics and various degrees of supposedly private *dīwān* intersect demonstrates these entanglements. Early in my fieldwork the tribal historian and opposition political leader Dr Ahmed Oweidi al-‘Abbadi invited me to come on a trip with him that he said would be illuminating for my research, to attend meetings in the northern cities of Jerash and Irbid. We attended meetings with journalists and visited a private *dīwān* in Irbid, taking off our shoes to enter, where a shaykh of the Bani Hāni entertained us to a *mansaf* lunch. We stayed there for most of the afternoon, the talk a mixture of posturing anecdotes, jokes and political talk, most aspirational rather than practical. Several times the shaykh declared

‘they [the Government] are starving us, really, they are starving us out’ as his gold-ringed hand descended into the bowl of buttered grains and meat. The key event of the afternoon was to be a visit to the Bani Hāni’s communal *dīwān* in Irbid, where members of the local community and neighbouring groups would attend. After the shaykh’s children had served us a final cup of coffee, we washed and dried our hands, and had the ritual exchanges of thanks, compliments and modest self-deprecating replies.

We then drove to the main communal *dīwān*. The shaykh put a tie on and Dr Ahmed his *shmargh* (red and white Arabic headscarf). We entered a reception line and kissed the cheeks and shook hands with the senior men, without removing our shoes. Then we sat in a row of large, formal chairs. The senior shaykh started the meeting with a formal prayer, and then mentioned that among them was a great scholar and historian of the tribes, Ahmed al-Uwāīdi of the ‘Abbad. Dr Ahmed thanked his host. Together they offered a short prayer at *Maghrib* (sunset). Then everyone got up and, forming another line to shake hands and kiss the cheeks of the senior men of the Bani Hāni, departed. The two spaces, in only one of which shoes were removed – the usual marker of entering a domestic space – contained markedly different publics and the type of conversation and politics that can take place in these two settings was markedly different.

In the communal meeting Dr Ahmed said on our way home, ‘I came to be seen and to be received’. The real meeting had taken place in the private *dīwān* over the meal. He explained (in English) ‘it is different, it was his home, he felt comfortable. Really, I would not talk about anything he was not comfortable talking about... You were maybe surprised at how bold his talk was?’ The point he wanted to teach me for my research was that he had widespread support and many men willing to talk openly in critical terms of the Government. Yet it was the difference between these two experiences of the *dīwān* that came to seem most revealing to me. The exclusivity and in particular the operation of protection inherent in a private *dīwān* permits a kind of public life, and a type of politics, impossible in larger, opener, and therefore more neutral, types of public, where both the degree of formal equality and the social distance between actors is greater.

4.4 A Gendered Place

The description thus far has implicitly shown the *dīwān* and the sociality that takes place within to be highly gendered, premised on patriarchal and gerontocratic

principles. The segregation of genders during formal hospitality, even for women with public lives outside of the home and in homes where the family normally eat together, is one of the ways of enacting hospitality and creating the ‘hospitable effect’ of intimate formality. Hospitality is ‘given’ by older men, but it is produced by women and the young, who as Hughes (2018:58) says are subsumed and erased ‘as mere extensions of these “senior men” who are the centre of attention.’ Women in the past, many of my older interlocutors felt, had generally had a larger role in the *dīwān*, if a distinctly subordinate one, as the main servers of guests, and as the owners and makers of goat-hair tents. Now these spaces are either built by men or bought commercially, and having a wife or daughter serve is a sign of poverty or meanness. Younger male relatives, children or best of all, hired domestic workers (usually non-Arab women) are now more prestigious.²⁰

Hierarchies of gender are thus inherent to hospitality, but in ways which change with the wide political environment. Annika Rabo (1996:166), in a wide-ranging discussion of the role of the state in gendering civil society in Jordan and Syria, states that in Jordan the royal house has been active not only in preserving but in creating ‘tribal’ sentiment. The male Arab Bedouin as father and family patriarch is evoked as a cultural ideal. Hospitality, honour, independence and fierce loyalty to the father are stressed as virtues, both by the royal house and by many Jordanians. Rabo makes this argument through a consideration of ideas of honour, and how the state maintains these (for instance through criminal and personal status laws). Women, Rabo maintains, have honour through men, and their virtue is important to the honour of men. Yet while Rabo’s point is well made, it obscures that *ird*, which Rabo glosses as ‘virtue’, is not the same as *sharaf* or *karām*, and while important to these other forms it is a largely passive and negative property, lost but not won. As such it does not have the same potential political power. By reinforcing a ‘tribal’ discourse (partly by default, through delegitimising other forms of social organisation), the entangled honours of those who share a name come to be politically significant, and given these gendered connotations of honour, this also genders the political space of hospitality to a much greater degree

²⁰ This of course intersects with racial discourses. As Rabo (1996) points out, the ideal subject is constructed not just as male, but as Arab as well, and as such hiring and showing off non-Arab servants is a prestigious claim. Going to meet a wealthy old man of the Fayiz family in the village of Um al-‘Amad, he proudly dismissed his son, my contact, who asked if we needed anything, saying with evident pride ‘if we do, my African will bring it’. Those who are not Bedouin Arab males are peripheral not only to such spaces themselves, but the kind of political discourse they embody.

than the public sphere of positions and office-holders, where women can sometimes play a prominent role.

Ethnographically, I found practices of gender segregation to be highly variable and often more flexible than they at first appear. Young children, boys and girls, come and go freely, and often transmit messages between male and female spaces, but from puberty, some households impose various degrees of segregation. In more segregated households, women remain in the kitchen or in a female guestroom (such as Figure 4.6), often next to the male, but with a separate entrance. Yet occasionally, even in relatively conservative homes, important female guests may be greeted in the main guestroom, in which case men may temporally be banished from the space, or with older married women and close female kin the segregation may be relaxed even on some formal occasions. In the *dīwān* of Hamīd bin Lufān ash-Shammāry, a tent separate from the house (and the subject of the next section), the space is gendered almost entirely, yet during the colder winter months where the smaller sitting room inside the house was used, a more informal atmosphere prevailed, and women would often sit briefly in the room with the men. On one visit, where the men had already eaten and were working on decorating an extension, I was taken to the women's guestroom with my wife to eat instead, under a framed picture of Hamīd's dead mother, mirroring Hamīd's father's portrait presiding over his *dīwān*.

The Dahamshah families of Um al-Walid were also mostly strictly segregated in the presence of guests, and I never met some of my interlocutors' wives and sisters, who I knew of only through my wife's visits. My Salaytah friends likewise would normally invite their wives to eat with us unless many important guests were present, but never unmarried daughters, who I only knew of through my wife, and were never talked about in front of me. Yet older women often came to talk with the men and sometimes guests; grandmothers and great-grandmothers, who in dress and deportment behaved very differently from younger women.²¹ On one occasion my host, who was entertaining a number of important guests, called his elderly mother to the *dīwān* and given a place of honour, to the right of the head of the family, though she quickly expressed a preference for the company in the female guestrooms where she alone presided.

²¹ These old women were often marked out by the now discontinued practise of blue tattoos around the mouth and use of henna, as well as wearing the older style of *abaya* and head dress.

In contrast to these various household levels of female seclusion from male-dominated hospitality, my friend Mohamad Abu Slayih, from a Naqab Bedouin family now living in Madaba, invited me to his home for celebratory meals on several occasions, and it was his mother, talkative and engaging, who took the lead in hosting, rather than his welcoming but taciturn father, and his teenage sisters also joined us to eat. Many Ammani families, especially richer ones, are largely unsegregated for normal social events outside large traditional weddings, and mostly eat in a Euro-American style dining room around a table rather than on the floor in a guestroom. Very rich, educated women tend not to veil and to mix somewhat freely with men. However visits to the realm of the village and relatives there often involve a return to segregation.

This gendering of hospitality is challenged by particular women, who through their position as influencers of one type or another, are rejecting the gendered hierarchy, sovereignty and centrality of *dīwān* spaces, finding their own instead. Hind al Fayiz, the opposition politician, made a point of carrying out meetings in her formal, business-style office, which she rents commercially and commutes to from her home. Her aesthetic as a ‘moderniser’ and an anti-corruption campaigner is in some ways dependant on an ability, in certain contexts at least, to keep the public and private separate. Even when she was the Bani Sakhr parliamentary deputy in 2014, and thus at the centre of various webs of patronage, she told me proudly she never had a *dīwān*. Others involved in Hirak (women and men) sometimes said similar things, about the importance of doing business transparently, escaping the stifling and perhaps corrupting web of familial and social connections centred on the *dīwān*. This was nevertheless challenged at other times. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, in 2016 unemployed young men taking part in a sit-in erected an ‘unemployment tent’ in Dhiban, which in its offer of hospitality to passers-by, accompanied with political talk, mirrored a *dīwān* in many ways, not least in its tacit exclusion of women, a point Muhummad As-Snayd made in relation to his activism in a female-dominated union for day-waged labourers, in order to express concern about the limitations of Hirak in its current form.

As well as those, such as Hind, in a position to challenge the centrality of the *dīwān* itself, there are also women who have managed to overcome opposition and appropriate this space to wield hospitality themselves, through their success in public roles. Halima Abu Qa’ida, the female manager of the Bani Hamida Project in Mukawir, was able to make introductions and facilitate my meetings with people in the district where she was influential and well-known. She could even take me with her to visit the

dīwān of a local shaykh. She explained she visited households in the district on business often, and sometimes sat in the women's room, sometimes the men's, depending on who her business was with. This was essential in practical terms for running the project and for her role as a local councillor (sitting on the *al-majlis al-balady*). For instance, when a husband tried to prevent his wife working at the weaving centre, she went and convinced him to change his mind, sitting for many hours drinking tea and remonstrating, flattering him about his reputation and how no one would think less of him, and how helpful the additional income would be for their sons. As her influence has grown, Halima now has a large guestroom of her own, and indeed hosted my wife and I to a large *mansaf* with her family, where she acted as both preparer and giver of hospitality, straddling these discrete roles. To do so acceptably though, Halima has taken to wearing *hijab*, like many women, a practice she said she did not do in the 1970s and 1980s when first working for the project, but which allows greater ease of interaction in public. She sighed as she showed us pictures of her unveiled when first working on the project, and said 'different times'.

These individual cases of successful women nevertheless show the various ways public life remains (and in some ways is increasingly) gendered. The dominant State discourse tends to place women into a subordinated private realm, subject to the state primarily only via male heads of family. The practices associated with the *dīwān* play a key role in this. As the above examples of Hind and Halima show, women can and do function in the public sphere. Women may own property, vote, and work in important jobs, but their ability to take part in the most valorised modes of social reproduction, reproducing the house, the state, and the name/space, remains contested. As Rabo (1996) makes clear, the State takes an active role in producing and policing the public and private in Jordan as elsewhere, although in ways particularised by historical circumstances and cultural understandings.²² The State in Jordan portrays itself as the protector of the traditional family and its norms, and often therefore a defender of patriarchal power. This is shown most clearly in Jordan's personal status laws,²³ based

²² Rabo argues that in Jordan as elsewhere, the State's definition of 'public' and 'private' is gendered (1996:167-168); with the royal house working to balance the interests of public and private realms. She focuses on the colonial origins in Syria and Jordan of personal status laws,

²³ These include; Article 61, whereby a wife who works outside the home without her husband's consent loses the right to alimony; various stipulations whereby violence committed against women is decriminalised if family reconciliation is agreed to by (male) kin; the Nationality Laws which allow the transmission of citizenship only by fathers (like tribal names); and the widely condoned but technically un-Islamic exclusion of women from their allotted (and under normal *Sharia* practice already smaller) share of inheritance.

on Hannafi *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), which in various ways enforce a dependant and subordinated status on women in relation to their male kin, and which are much more stringent on (seemingly more private) matters of family life and social reproduction than on matters of women's public and political role, which are theoretically constitutionally enshrined.

Given this position, women are not merely relegated to a private sphere, they are made to constitute and signify it. The power of family heads over women is especially central in the *dīwān*. Successful professional women are still subordinated in such settings, and therefore in the politics of patronage and mediation that occur through them, which often presents major disadvantages in other areas of (supposedly public) life. Their presence, and their seclusion, are both integral to creating the 'privacy' of the private *dīwān* and in marking it as a special protected space, encompassed by/encompassing, but somewhat separate from, the house, and especially its purely domestic areas. This privacy is not the sense of private carried in the Arabic term *khass*, meaning specific to an individual or family, and used in terms such as 'private' *dīwān*, but rather that which emerges from descriptions of spaces or situations using terms such as '*aīly* (family-ly) *dakhaly*, (interior/inside) or even *hurma* (inviolable). The sense of 'private' the presence of women generates is more symbolic than real in many cases, as women increasingly can and do function in the 'public' realm, going to school, university and work alongside unrelated men. This is accepted by many but by no means all Jordanians. Yet the presence of women in the *dīwān*, contextually a type of limited and enclosed public, remains for many far more problematic.

4.5 A Place of Accord

At a practical level, the *dīwān* is used as a venues for dispute resolutions (discussed in Chapter 2), which can have real consequences. Most of my interlocutors knew or knew of people who had been caught up in dispute resolutions, often having to go into *jalwa*, temporary banishment, to another part of the country, or paying blood money, or even in one case losing the family business. A detailed ethnographic description of my experiences in a particular *dīwān* is useful for demonstrating how this role as a courthouse fits with that already described above. The *dīwān* in question is that of Hamīd bin Lufān ash-Shammary (photographed in Figures 4.7-9), a key interlocutor in Madaba, who I knew as Abu Badr. I was invited by my friend Badr, his son, who told

me ‘you must speak to my father, he has history. You must come eat with him. We will make you a *mansaf*’. I made the normal refusals, but these were batted away with more force than usual, convincing me he was in earnest. I soon heard from others that Badr’s father was a well-known poet and dispute-resolver, often called a ‘judge’ for his informal role in such discussions. Badr explained on the way that his family was ‘traditional’, and that I would go with him to his father’s *dīwān*, while my wife would go to his mother’s and sisters’ guestroom. We accepted this, already used to such arrangements, even though they are not ubiquitous. He had kin from Iraq staying, as well as his relations from the Bani Sakhr, from Mutirāt and Dahamshah, the ‘*ashā’ir*’ I knew best.

Badr proudly told me the *dīwān* was famous, as it was *taqlīdy* ‘traditional’ and beautiful. He showed me some pictures from Facebook as we walked. As a tribal judge, he would post pictures on his Facebook page of satisfied disputants reconciling in his *dīwān*. When I arrived I had been told before-hand to make the popular and archly anachronistic *Badawy* communal greeting ‘strength to the plunder-takers’ (*guwah al ghanmiyyin*) as it would impress and amuse his father and his guests, but then to greet each guest individually with enquiries as to their health and news, kissing each cheek. The *dīwān* is a studied replica of a Bedouin tent, complete with camel saddles and a gas stove done up like an antique Arab fire-pit with coffee regalia, and with electric lights and charge-points, a flat screen television and large, imposing pictures of his father and grandfather, and a poem he had written on the past glories of the Shammar. Badr sat me down near his father and called his visiting Iraqi cousin who acted as the *gahwaji*, the coffee-maker to pour us each a cup of coffee in the small, thimble like cups (*finājīn*) used for such gestures, before disappearing, leaving me alone with his father. After we had all taken some sweets, Abu Badr began to quiz me on my research, particularly on what I knew of the Shammar, correcting some points in my history, and particularly asking my views on Glubb Basha, who he told me had lived at Um al-Walid for a time. His friends showed some interest in Glubb, but soon lost interest in me, talking instead with anger about the war in Yemen and watching the news on Al Jazeera.

People would file through during the meeting while children ran in and out carrying messages from Abu Badr’s wife. Young men came at various points, greeting their host politely, although they barely registered in the conversation, often taking photographs of themselves with the *dīwān* as a pleasing backdrop. I asked Abu Badr specifically about his position. ‘Are you a shaykh?’ He smiled ‘that is *mujamlah* [a term

suggesting flattery], my family has had many shaykhs, many men famous in poems, but I am not really a shaykh, there are no shaykhs now. The Shammar are not strong in Jordan.’ ‘They call you *qādy* [‘judge’]’ I said encouragingly. He smiled again modestly, ‘y’ani’ he said, a phrase of equivocation. I insisted, and asked him to explain why he was called *qādy* and what it meant. He modestly said it was just talk, he was no judge. There were judges among the Shammar, as among all noble tribes, but his lineage was not counted among them. However, he was famous as a poet and knowledgeable about genealogy and *urf* (‘custom’) and as there were few Shammar in Jordan and no recognised judges, he was often requested to adopt the role. His reputation meant that now others from the Bani Sakhr, whose own legal resolution practices he also knew well, would come to him too.

There was no jurisdiction in this, the *qādy* in a dispute resolution may have an official document of recognition and/or a hereditary precedent to claiming the position, but anyone who is asked by both the parties in a dispute to arbitrate between them can fulfil the role. Ibn Lufān hosted men from both parties in his own *dīwān* in order to bring about reconciliation. He told me of various cases of the *qātil/maqtūl* type (Section 2.3), but stated he dealt with smaller cases unofficially using these principles. He rarely dealt with homicide, although he had settled a car accident leaving a driver badly disabled, setting a correspondingly high *diyyah* (blood money). Small and unofficial acts, acting as a broker and guarantor in situations where trust had broken down between family members or business partners, were more his usual domain, and as he said, were as such not directly under the Palace Convention. It was, he insisted, his *dīwān* that had gained the reputation as a place for resolving disputes, not merely himself as a mediator. The materiality of the place therefore is important to its purpose.

It might seem that this fairly formal and somewhat abstracted conversation about Bedouin law in theory and practice was quite separate to the social-media-friendly, almost folklorised surroundings in which it was delivered. But it is in this social and legal context, as much as in tourism and heritage, that such an aesthetic seems to recur in Jordan. I was encouraged to visit at will and took up this standing invitation often in the months to come, often being asked to rehearse or preform some point of poetry or genealogy I had been taught the time before, to the amusement of all. The slightly arch sense of dressing up and performing (at least for me and perhaps for the younger men present) is all part of the place’s appeal and claim to a type of sovereignty. It draws its authority in part from a visual and affective appeal to history and to an imagined

distinctive and moral past. If younger men and women don't wholly accept this claim, they do not entirely break with it either. Marwan, the administrator of the Bani Sakhr Facebook page, was one of the few younger people who sat regularly in his relative Hamīd bin Lufān's *dīwān*, posting pictures of it on his feed. The Facebook administrator and the shaykh are here both making use of the same aesthetic. They are both, more importantly, drawing semiotic potency from a particular idea of valourised hospitality and sovereignty.

In an interview with Marwan, about his role as administrator for the Bani Sakhr Facebook group, he broke off suddenly from a series of questions his group's reporting on Bani Sakhr involvement in protests, and told me that the question I should be asking was 'what has happened to the shaykhs' – when these sort of disputes take place, why are they and their pronouncements not more audible? For Marwan the shaykhs and the shaykhly culture of the *dīwān* remain central, worthy of respect and veneration. But for many on his and other similar sites on social media, pride in origins and names, and even shared political loyalty, have become far more diffuse. The shaykh's *dīwān* remains as potent symbol and backdrop, but leadership and decision making have passed to others. The reason, Marwan told me, that websites and groups like his are carefully controlled, is because they have been implicated in instigating a number of violent clashes on university campuses, and organising communal violent collective action in relation to wider feuds and conflicts. In the idealised version of shaykhly leadership, disputes are deferred to the deliberations of elders in the *dīwān*, and the violent potential of young men, fierce solidarities, and a wish for revenge kept within strict limits, and generally diffused. This, in a sense, is the deal shaykhs and tribal judges have made with state authorities. Abu Badr's *dīwān* shows how the model of 'tribal' dispute resolution has expanded outwards informally far beyond the limits set upon it by the Palace Convention, but beyond even such settings, the politics of name/space has taken on new, wider and perhaps less controlled forms. I will explore this potential in Chapter 6.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to link together the previous two historically-focused chapters, exploring ethnographically the practices and dilemmas surrounding hospitality, dispute resolution and political spaces in the Bedouin villages. I built on the concern from Chapter 2 with defining and locating tribes and Bedouin in contemporary

Jordan through practices of hospitality, honour and everyday politics, and the ways they are reinforced infrastructurally by, for instance, dispute resolution laws. I have linked this to the concern in Chapter 3 with land, place and villagisation, in order to suggest that the *dīwān*, as a social space and putative centre for tribal categories, is crucial in reproducing the association between names and places, and the idea that certain places are politically more than just national subject space. I have argued that in the concrete geographical space of the *dīwān*, and through various practices of hosting and of protection, the continuing significance of names and named social categories and of the everyday politics of hospitality and patronage intersect. I suggest that these places, and the types of public they constitute, are essential for understanding the historical reproduction of ideas of tribe and of tribal politics, and a broader politics of patronage, interpersonal mediation and representation, sidestepping the official publics of the state and ‘civil society’. The *dīwān* crosses lines between heritage and *wāstah*, and scales from the domestic house to the kingdom itself.

Because of this very ability to operate across scales, to resonate symbolically in different fields, I also suggest that it is neither possible nor analytically useful to mark a firm distinction between the public and the private, the domestic house and the public hall or office, the state and civil society. The state, which has been built around a royal house which portrays itself as a senior branch of a national family, cannot be separated neatly from the *dīwān*, unless we see the state only through the lens of familiar, bureaucratic Euro-American state models, which in practice tend to be similarly compromised. I have tried to move beyond the idea of a single or *general* public in my analysis, whose division from the private is a feature of certain currents of modernisation theory (Giddens 1992). The idea of creating a specific *type* of public, one of many, is I argue essential to the idea of the *dīwān*. This is not a single, intermediate ‘public’ that sits between the state and the family, as civil society is portrayed in many accounts, but rather many potential publics existing at a range of scales from Ghazi’s small guestroom in ad-Dīr (Figure 4.5), to the huge hall of Mithqal (Figures 4.2-4.4)

The emergence of new social-media driven modes of sociality, might, Hughes points out, suggest the rules and consensus-seeking of *dīwān*-based elders are becoming marginalised or circumvented. However, he departs from this analysis in arguing that these new social forms are through their engagement with exemplary patterns, bound to collapse back into them. Hughes states (2018:50);

The introduction of a new medium of communication has also intensified their engagement with certain pre-existing kinship logics – even if their elders view those engagements as illegitimate.

My argument runs largely along similar lines, except that instead of seeing the pre-existing, or ‘traditional’, logic that such behaviour engages with (and seems to collapse back into) as ‘kinship logics’ I see them as logics of sovereignty, representation and patronage; logics which I argue show no sign of withering with the power of genealogical elites. Yet despite this continuity of mediation, the increasing marginalisation of formal hospitality for many young Bedouin Jordanians, in part a response to economic crisis, does have important consequences. Many, as we shall see in the next two chapter, feel at once unable to reproduce the social world of their parents, and also ambivalent about trying to do so. It also opens up a widening gap between practice of patronage and *wāstah* still regarded as essential but increasingly criticised, and the genealogical, socio-cultural and political meaning of identifying with ‘*ashīrah*’ type categories. The two, long held together through claims to represent and protect made by lineages of shaykhs and *kubār*, may increasingly drift apart.

I make this argument despite it presenting an ethnographic dilemma. Many of my interlocutors would place emphasis on *dam*, ‘blood’ – over power, deference to wealth or leadership. However in practice, most visitors to the *dīwān* are ‘kin’ in the sense of having relations with the host that are genealogically ‘known’ not in the sense of intimacy or shared substance, still less shared purpose. It is business contacts, neighbours and potential patrons and clients who interact here, not just cousins, even when the idiom of kinship is used. Moreover, it is through this space that the most powerful, often deeply embedded in the state apparatus as ministers, officers or parliamentary deputies, can claim to be intermediaries and representatives, for it is here they can mediate between the world of officials and offices and their own ‘people’. As such, the *dīwān* as a space makes concrete both the ideas of reputation, honour and social reproduction we have seen in previous chapters, and the shadowy notion of representative sovereignty as a concept hovering behind the everyday politics of the Bedouin villages of Madaba. These settings however also privilege the view of the patron and his clients. In the next chapter, I turn to some of those who refuse, contest or radically reimagine such settings and the politics they embody. In doing so, the pervasiveness of, and the limits to, the representative sovereignty of the established order become clear.

5 “YOU CANNOT EAT US, OUR FLESH IS BITTER”: DILEMMAS OF CONSUMPTION, ACCUMULATION AND ANTICIPATION IN THE BEDOUIN VILLAGES OF MADABA

Ma btagdr tāklna lahmna mur. [You cannot eat us; our flesh is bitter].

Popular proverb (mithal) among Bani Sakhr young men.

In the age of Shaykhs, the strong ate the weak

Andrew Shryock (2019b:14)

In this chapter, I turn to the ways my interlocutors talk about consumption and accumulation and the role this has in mediating and contesting their positionality within the varied moral and political economy of Jordan. The language of consumption, as metaphor and mode of analysis, was often deployed by my interlocutors when discussing economic matters. The metaphor of consumption hints at political and economic positionality (who eats whom); where the verb *ākl-* literally to ‘eat’ is invested with a set of meanings to do with taking, suffering and using up. The ‘strong eat the weak’ (*al-kubār āklu ad-d’aīf*), people and whole groups are ‘eaten’ by the state, and in my setting young Bedouin declare a fierce resistance to outside abuse through the title phrase, in which they declare that an unnamed outsider cannot eat them, as their flesh is bitter – where to be eaten is to be beaten and under the power of others.

This connects to a wider anthropological interest in the use of consumption and predation as both a central metaphor and at times key experiential element of political economic relations and processes (see for instance Wilk 2004, Graeber 2011 Newell 2012, Candea and Da Col 2012), what Doukas (in Graeber 2011:503) terms ‘a symbolic eating that both destroys and incorporates its object’. This latter point is important; the particular cannibalistic image of the title phrase seeks to resist not just destruction, but incorporation. It seems to proclaim sovereignty through inedibility.

By insisting on the metaphorical quality of talk of consumption I aim to avoid objections to consumption as a coherent analytical category of political economy.¹ Here rather I focus on ethnographic usage of the verb to ‘eat’, and other direct statements about using up and consuming, in wider contexts than food. I thereby disassociate this usage from both the maximal Frankfurt School use of the term, and consumer culture as creative identity-making that Graeber (2011) takes aim at, as well as maintaining contact with the Medieval genealogy and etymology that Graber (*ibid*) puts forward.² Even so, wider conceptions of global trends in consumption and a consumer culture are entangled with such metaphorical talk. Many of the ethnographic examples I consider where people talk of *eating* are at the interface between everyday life and wider transnational economic trends (which Graeber associates with neoliberalism), particularly relating to the rise in cultural tourism in Jordan. Among former-pastoralists in Jordan, the metaphor of eating from one’s flock or herd (whether actually or through selling more animals than the natural rate of replacement) remains a powerful image of profligacy and short-sightedness; a practice only to be undertaken in desperation or to fulfil honourable obligations of hospitality. This fits uneasily with other powerful (and often but not always more recent) images of meaningful economic life and spending,

¹ This is not to accept ‘consumption’ as a category of political economy, with the same range of meanings and applications it has come to have in twentieth century Euro-American writing. Richard Wilk (2004) produced a detailed mapping of the range of meaning and metaphor underlying consumption as a category, focusing in particular on the central metaphor of eating; which seems to precede and inform all other meanings of the term, as one of the primary experiences of human life. Wilk points out that consumption fits uneasily between being a category or a phenomenon, and is neither ever quite an analytical nor a ‘native’ category.

² And as Graeber rightly points out, ‘these ideas [theories of desire] were very likely developed earlier and more extensively in the Islamic World’ (2011:496).

not to mention attitudes towards conspicuous wealth, escaping poverty, and personal autonomy, the scene for a series of dilemmas I explore in this chapter.³

This chapter also returns to the theme of land, analysed in Chapter 3, as a site where the demands of social reproduction come into tension with ideas of semi-separate tribal or Bedouin protected spaces differentiated from the impersonalised subject territory of the nation-state. The ideal of being capable of protecting one’s house and providing for family, autonomous from others but with one’s honour entangled with that of one’s kin and associates, is hard to pull off in a political economy where living off one’s own resources in the villages cannot compete with taking work in the city (which mostly involves submitting to networks of patronage). Talk of *eating*, of salaries, people and ‘tribes’ are not merely metaphorical flourishes but suggestive of a certain intersubjective disposition towards economic life. This talk brings into focus a set of dilemmas around what makes a good and satisfying life, how it should be achieved, what its opposites and alternatives might be, and the obstacles faced in pursuing it. I make a comparison with the largely abandoned anthropological concept of the ‘image of the limited good’ (Foster 1965) to look at anxieties over seemingly selfish or a-social accumulation and success, as well as economic worries over subsistence, represented by bread and meat, and fears of the erosion of sociality. Emerging from this, I consider the political consequences of a fundamental dilemma faced by my young (and mostly male) interlocutors over money, status and accumulation; between cutting their ties and going it alone or submitting to what seems an increasingly marginal but still just survivable place within an entangled and constrained social order.

I contend that an analysis of the experiences of young and unemployed or precariously employed *shabāb* (a term meaning ‘youth’ applied to an increasingly wide age-group) in Madaba both enriches and problematises elements of the current anthropological interest in ‘waithood’ and ‘stuckedness’ commonly applied to work in Arabic-speaking countries, to talk about the problem of young people facing circumstances that make it difficult to transition to social adulthood at the customary age. Their ‘waithood’ I argue, can productively be viewed as a feature of a certain liminality in their position. Vertical relations of moral patronage between generations

³ Evident here is perhaps something of the clash Graber (and before him Sahlins) explores between the discourse of human nature as one of insatiable greed and material gratification, with historical and ethnographic observations that show that most people have never behaved in such a way, so that it appears that ‘the maximising individual existed in theory long before it emerged in practice’ (2011:498).

and class remain a powerful force, including those articulated through the name/space categories of *'ashīrah*. Older male kin were and to some extent still are expected to find a job and eventually a wife for young men, and then to assist in assembling the vast social and material capital to host a large wedding (often involving hundreds or even thousands of guests and three days of celebration) and then setting up the couple in a house or apartment of their own, but close by to kin. This is increasingly unrealistic for most Jordanian families. Demographic and economic trends have altered the potential of these vertical links to bind individuals together and in particular have limited the transfer of wealth and social capital. As a result I argue horizontal age-based solidarities have been strengthened, especially as school and university education pulls young men away from the household and a model of learning centred on the *dīwān*, as discussed in the last chapter.

5.1 Who Eats Whom?: the encompassing background

Ironically... the artefacts of peoples are sometimes celebrated as examples of national heritage at the same historical moment that the people who made the objects are being turned into the urban poor or the most menial workers... Thus in an utterly Baudrillardian move by national elites, the sign replaces the referents

Sherry Errington (1998:43)

Errington's analysis seems applicable to Jordan, where the state in its formation and drive towards modernisation has consumed *'ashā'ir* (by pacifying them and forcing them into the structure of the state), and is now consuming them in another sense, as a marketable 'identity' product. Bedouin culture is consumed for nationalistic, touristic and heritage purposes, via symbols on public buildings and at state occasions, and by tourists as part of their experience of Wadi Rum or Petra (see for instance Chatelard 2005). Those southern tribes who work with tourists most closely, the B'dul and the Huwaītāt, are often referred to disparagingly as the 'whores of the foreigners' (*'ahārāt al-ajānib*) but in other contexts, the whole of Jordan is critically seen in this way; a state reliant on foreign aid for keeping the peace with Israel against the objections of a

majority of their own citizens, where American military bases are permitted, and where the Government sides with American soldiers over Jordanian Bedouin in disputes.⁴

Those directly working in tourism – the so-called ‘whores’ – are of course often themselves reflective on the consequences of commodification. One Zalaibi Huwaītāt man working in Wadi Rum told me his family used to make the bitter Arabic coffee over a fire regularly themselves, but had stopped because they had to do it so often for tourists during choreographed displays of the ‘Bedouin coffee ritual’ and so they had ‘become tired’. The actions, one might say, had lost semiotic potency through commodification and alienation from their context. Friends shared on Facebook a now-famous cartoon (Figure 5.1) showing a traditionally-dressed *gahwahjī* (coffee-maker) of the type large hotels and businesses pay to serve a coffee of welcome (*gahwah ad-daīf* – which once offered guests who drank it the protection and hospitality of the host). As he serves tourists who photograph him he receives a call from his wife, to tell him his cousin is visiting. He tells her the cousin will only want money, and to give him only tea instead of coffee and to refuse him meat. The message, it seems, is that in the context to a society that which demands a performance of hospitality, its reality and its associate dispositions, are undermined.

Figure 5.1: Cartoon by Emad Hajjaj – 16 March 2013. Retrieved on 6 September 2018 from URL <https://ainnews.net/526-حجاج-عماد/#.XbZF0i2cZR0>.



⁴ In November 2016 a Huwaītāt Bedouin guard had killed several American servicemen in a firefight outside the gates of an American Airforce base in Jordan; the Americans saw this as a case of Islamist terrorism, while the Huwaītāt protest organisers maintained the Americans had been drunk and refused to identify themselves at the compound gate – the case thus rapidly became about both the Huwaītāt’s sovereignty and pride in the face of the Government, but also about wider concerns about Jordan’s subservience to America influence (Hamarneh 2003, Hughes 2019).

The power of *karām* (hospitality), following Shryock (2004), is maintained by displacing it from the corrupted and commodified present into an imagined heroic past, the same past from which the narrative genre of competitive generosity and shaykhs bankrupting themselves to host guests emerges from. By making these things consumable, their power and authenticity may be consumed too, even used up, and so can only be maintained by denying the authenticity of their contemporary manifestations.

The royal house in Jordan has both sought to turn its Bedouin subjects into pacified, sedenterised, consumers subject to techniques of capitalist economy, whilst simultaneously consuming and commodifying these same subjects for tourists and recasting them as a symbolic source of authenticity, legitimacy and national culture in the face of complex and ambiguous claims about the nation. This two-fold move, summed up to some degree by the opening quote from Errington, can be seen as encompassment. The concept of encompassment is a useful one for analysing the relationship between the state/governmental and tribal at the level of discourse. This is an expansion on Massad's argument that by firstly imposing a standardised form of tribal law through the *Mahad al-Qasr* (the Palace Convention discussed in Chapter 2) unifying the disparate traditions and dispute resolution systems across the country, and then by exempting state security and military personnel from tribal law (even, indeed especially, when they are themselves members of tribes) the state gained the ability to encompass the tribal. Massad states (2001:62);

This point is crucial in the modern nation-state's ability to demarcate the borders between the traditional and the modern. Whereas the modern nation-state can and should include within itself "traditional" authority structures and practices, these are always already subsumed under the supreme authority of the modern state's laws to which they will always be subservient.

Rather than the tribal being coeval with the modern, it is encompassed by it. In a similar way, the term *dīra* – discussed in the introduction as the claimed territory or zone of permitted movement associated with a particular *‘ashīrah* – has been appropriated by the state as a secondary and subordinate synonym for *watan* ('homeland'), so that the whole of Jordan becomes a single 'tribal' territory for the Jordanian 'tribe' – for instance in the popular 1960s nationalist song *diratnah* – ('our country'). The tribe is thus consumed, repurposed and encompassed by the state, and in

particular by the royal house and the court, where the king presides as a sort of paramount shaykh. All sovereignty and chains of obligation flows up to this apical point, no matter if they are official-bureaucratic in character, based around supposedly ‘traditional’ authority structures, or even if they are based on the informal patron-client relationships of *wāstah* and the competitive pursuit of honour.

This is a compelling conceptual analysis at the discursive level, but at the messy level of lived reality this apical unidirectional model breaks down. The Palace Convention is flaunted by both the state and the tribal subjects it regulates and produces. Police have on several occasions ended up paying blood money to the families of those they have killed or injured in their duties (Watkins 2014), while I often heard of revenge attacks made outside of its agreed limits. In practice then, a space of equivocation and creative contestation emerges, where who eats whom can be disputed, although of course within the limits of the encompassing structure of the nation-state.

5.2 Idealised Consumption: house-building and feasting

When visiting the home of Khalid, an interlocutor from the small Salaytah *‘ashīrah* in the village of ar-Rama to the south-east of Madaba, on the edge of the desert, he walked me around his two-story concrete house, pointing out with pride the rising new buildings all around the hillside; homes for his brothers, sons and cousins. All this land had been grazing for his family’s goats when he was a boy living in a small two-roomed stone house in the winter and camping out with the animals in the summer, now it was almost a village in its own right, built through the wealth and social capital of his father and now through his own pre-eminent position as a government employee and business owner. Built slowly, over many years, adding extra rooms and floors as and when money has allowed, all with roof columns proclaiming further expansion to come, these homes are a material marker of Khalids extensive network of relations within which his home remains a focal point for important gatherings and for hosting visitors. ‘I live better now than the shaykh in my father’s day’. Khalid had picked me up earlier in the day from the roundabout in Dhiban, and asked me on arrival if I had any problems – Dhiban he said, was not a safe place, as the young people were making trouble for everyone. He positioned himself as removed geographically and politically from Hirak.

His father, Abu Salah, now dead, was born in a tent in the late 1930’s, and had been the first of his family to become a soldier. Astute and assiduous investment in his network and his career had allowed him to find good jobs for his sons and nephews

and make good marriages for his daughters, bringing in bride wealth (*mahr*) and forming further connections. He, and his sons in his stead, embody an ideal of personhood and self-realisation based around social continuity and reproduction of social roles into the future. However, as their reliance on grazing land has been supplanted by government salaries and pensions, and the market value of this land has risen with expanding demand from the capital, this inherited land has been sold or leased by his sons to provide his family with the capital they need to build their own homes. Khalid's brother Aly, who didn't finish school and so has struggled to find employment outside the village, looks after the remaining family flock, grazing them on semi-desert waste-land east of the village in the winter and in the summer on farmland owned by others with whom he has unwritten reciprocal understandings.

Land-as-property, as we have seen in Chapter 3, is a relatively recent disposition for people who prior to the 20th century largely saw land as limitless, more a burden than a resource for those tied too closely to it, and therefore vulnerable to the extractive and coercive powers of urban states. Livestock, offspring and water were valuable and limited, not land. Yet even as land has become valuable, there has been a slow contraction of land ownership among Bedouin, often in favour of businessmen or business ventures expanding outwards from the capital. His two oldest sons married and were given money to help them build their own homes by selling land, increasingly valuable in this area not far from the Madaba-Amman road, where a new shopping mall, university and flats have all recently gone up. As discussed in Chapter 5, one of the main consequences of land settlement and registration has been that many with claims to land have been able to gain access to capital via sale or mortgage-like *sharia*-compliant 'leases' (*ista'jar*) or even threats to disputing another's ownership. By becoming a commodity, land-as-resource has become something that can be 'eaten'. Facing rising costs to help his kin marry and form households, Khalid told me, sadly, that his children were 'eating him'.

This loss of patrimony is a source of concern for some. Again and again, when collecting life histories from older interlocutors, stories of land sales and (potentially religiously-illicit) loans to get through hard times, to pay for weddings or to set-up children, were treated with ambivalence, often represented as exploitative tricks by canny outsiders, especially merchants from Nablus. While for many young interlocutors, finding themselves without the inheritance of ancestral lands, the exchange of land for homemaking and the kind of social expansion Abu Ahmed

completed so successfully is increasingly unattainable. The ambition of many older Jordanians was to use one’s wealth to extend one’s own sphere of sovereignty legitimately, through established and married adult sons, through daughters marrying upwards, through expanding social relationships and networks of patronage. Yet to do so through using up land is problematic, like eating from one’s herd. As mentioned in Chapter 3, tribal claimants to land were shocked to find that what they regarded as communally held *dira* was in fact registered as sold to others – outsiders – long ago. When discussing the ruined fortress of the Adwan Shaykhs at Tal al-Hisban with a Bani Sakhr friend he said ‘this was all ‘Adwan land in the time of the famous Shaykh ‘Ali Dhiyab, but it was sold over many years to Nabulsi merchants and the Ajarmah too.⁵ In the end it was all gone. His sons asked where their patrimony was and the father said, it has been eaten (*al-turāth mākul*)’.

To ‘eat’ (*ākl*) in the context of wealth or money means to consume unwisely, foolishly or greedily, in a way that does not steward but depletes. It is also used in the context of being fined where people will say ‘I ate a parking ticket’ – to consume in the sense of accommodating a misfortune. To ‘eat’ one’s salary (*ākl al-rātib*) means to spend it all on transient things, without benefit. My Dahamshah Bani Sakhr friend Hamid was often in conflict with older male relatives who accused him of eating his salary in reference to his excessive smoking habits (getting through three boxes of cigarettes a day). An interlocutor who had long been saying he was saving his money to buy a car, told me he had become demoralised – ‘perhaps I should just go to Egypt and have sex with a prostitute’ he said, only half joking. He already spent much of his salary on alcohol. Unproductive transient consumption is connected to many of the social anxieties relating to young male sociality outside of the home or the *dīwān*, especially in relation to gathering to drink alcohol or smoke cannabis. The religious sin of these practices and the way they consume money in a way without leaving social benefit are deeply linked in this and many other contexts – alcohol was *haram*, one religious interlocutor explained, because it made people forget about their duties, to others and to God.

In a less extreme way, accusations of eating salaries on smoking cigarettes and the coffeehouse were used by older men to brow-beat their sons, using fears of feckless spending to justify keeping their adult sons at home and making them hand over any

⁵ The Ajarmah are a small ‘ashīrah of mixed origins considered to be *mish āsīl* - ‘non-noble’.

earnings, paying them only pocket money into their thirties. From Hamid's point of view, his life was doomed or destined to 'just go on like this, to go round' and therefore saving seemed pointless. He might as well spend. This sort of experiential account has become associated with a wider political-economic argument about the nature of youth in the Global South.⁶

Of course, transient consumption can also play a role in projects of social climbing and aspiration, and is not always seen as immorally profligate. Consumption certainly marks worldly success, especially in Amman, a city full of expats and Jordanians who have spent time abroad. Even in the villages around Madaba trips to malls and to the country's single large Ikea on the Airport Road were prestigious outings for ambitious university graduates, and often opportunities to take aspirational photographs for social media.

The consumption of transient experiences or claiming and marking status is neither new nor limited to straightforwardly imported forms. Indeed it is entangled with valorised practices. Occasions where *mansaf* was eaten, or where *gahwah al-'araby* was prepared, or a particularly fine *dīwān* visited are also emphasised in social media feeds, and are also sought out commercially for enjoyment. Both contemporary internationalised and individualised consumption and putatively traditional heritage products can be used for conspicuous consumption and appealing consumerism in carefully choreographed and curated displays. As I have discussed elsewhere (in Wojnarowski and Williams 2020) *mansaf* is treated by the Jordanian tourism industry and by the royal house as a symbol of authenticity, unity and a hardy national character, but is simultaneously becoming a subject of commercialised consumerism. Comfortably-off families show their status by regularly preparing *mansaf* for everyday domestic consumption, often in a modified form using chicken instead of red meat and eating off individual plates with cutlery rather than eating communally from a single platter (*sidr*).

Entertaining, especially at weddings, must be on a lavish scale including a meat *mansaf* made with freshly slaughtered animals. For all but the poorest families a wedding (*'ars*) has involved feeding hundreds of guests with meat. One family I spoke to, struggling to maintain a certain standard of life on a single military salary, had

⁶ Of course, narratives of feckless consumerism and a lack of responsibility among young people are not limited to the Global South – talk of Millennials spending too much on brunch and avocado toast are examples of a related genre, as is the counter-narrative of increasing precarity and rising costs making long-term saving goals unrealistic for young people.

bought 12 sheep for the marriage of a son (as well as hiring a tent and several hundred chairs) costing over 2,000 Jordanian Dinars, more than four months’ income for them. Locally produced *jamīd* (dried yoghurt) and red meat, *lahmah balady*, are favoured for important social occasions, but are increasingly hard to get hold of. They either require considerable domestic labour, the employment of social capital, or sufficient money to buy these labour-intensive products commercially. In particular domestic red meat is ever more expensive, while still failing to generate adequate livelihoods for rural pastoralist consumers.⁷ This has led (as Hughes 2015 discusses) to various moves among modernisers and Islamists to simplify the wedding, cutting away its excessive expense and reliance on leveraging vast social networks.⁸ Sally Howell (2003:222) notes similarly the sentiment ‘they should be feeding and educating their children instead of spending all their money on meat!’

Yet simplifications often meet with dismay from older Jordanians. At a wedding near Dhiban that a Salaytah friend invited me to attend, guests were hosted in a *salah* (a commercially rented hall, more affordable than hosting at home) and instead of *mansaf*, shop-bought *kunafah* (a sweet cheese-based pastry) and coffee were served. Our friend jokingly remarked at the reception ‘where is dinner?’ and afterwards he expressed his dismay and sympathy for the groom’s relatives, who had had the shame of greeting friends and affines without meat. Such weddings, generally agreed to be better than executing a traditional wedding poorly, do little to intensify and expand social relations in the way that a full wedding feast does. I heard much gossip in the village of Naur, near Madaba, of a wealthy Shuwabkah family who had held an expensive wedding in a hotel, to which only a few of their closest kin were invited. ‘*Haram*, those with money should invite everyone, they can afford to do weddings in the proper way’. Samer, who had not been invited, but might have expected to be, told me. In a further break with local mores, they had used outside caterers, rather than slaughtering their own animals

⁷ Domestic red meat has risen from 7JD /Kg for lamb in 2012 to over 12JD. A whole sheep or goat costs 200JD (£220), over half the average monthly salary. Even those who have livestock face rising feed-costs. While for everyday meals chicken (*dajaj*) is used in the same recipes, so that overall meat consumption has risen, chicken is often considered unsuitable for feast dishes.

⁸ Hughes (2015) suggests the cost of weddings and their role in privileging marriage-as-familial-alliance has driven the growth of the Chastity Society (*jama’iyyat al-‘afāf al-khayriyya*), an international Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated charity, which seeks to encourage young people to marry, offering help to organise mass-weddings as well as classes to prepare couples for Islamic married life (Hughes 2015). The Society encourages several practices that are problematic to older traditional authorities who use the language of honour and ‘*ashīrah*’; companionate marriage, small weddings, low bride-price and an implicit urge to tame excessive masculine passion and forcefulness.

and preparing them domestically. Conspicuous consumption is most idealised when that which is consumed is produced domestically, locally, and through social networks rather than impersonal commercial transactions.

This ties into a widespread idealisation of domestic, and at a higher level national, self-sufficiency. Literature on the Jordanian ‘national character’ and culture often emphasises frugality and work ethic, even calling Jordanians the ‘Germans of the Middle East’, differentiated from the conspicuous consumers of Lebanon and the Gulf (see for instance Nasser 2004). This stereotype is clearly misleading in many ways, especially for rural Bedouin families and most of all for older men. Frugality in personal matters (when eating, in dress, and in home furnishings) was often described by older Bedouin as a mark of being *muhtrim* (respected) and, counter-intuitively being *m’aruf* (‘known’). Famous and popular shaykhs of the past, like Haditha Kraishah and Auda Abu Tayi (but noticeably *not* Mithqal) are remembered as perennially impoverished by their hospitality and generosity, acting as a river to their relatives and friends. Frugality in personal matters must always be tempered with outward generosity and indeed a carefully cultivated disdain for cost. The host should provide an excess of (modest, domestically-produced) food for guests while eating little himself, and I was often told that Bedouin guests would also have always tried to eat little, needing much encouragement from the host to take their fill. To eat sparingly ‘like a hawk picking’ as one older interlocutor put it, was the mark of good manners and deportment.

All this serves to highlight the moralisation of consumption; dividing that which is socially productive from that which is not. In this way certain narrow types of excessive consumption to do with hospitality (often referred to as ‘the Arab madness’ in a popular aphorism) sit alongside a vision of domestic self-sufficiency and personal frugality. Displaying a certain outward modesty and contempt for money and selfish individual accumulation, even on occasion a bravado of financial carelessness and generosity, was often explained to me as a part of ‘Bedouin culture’ (*thukāfah badawīah*). In this sense personal frugality and communal conspicuous consumption come together as two elements of a single ethic or economic logic.⁹ During my Master’s fieldwork in Petra in 2012 I heard tell of Bedouin men burning money at a wedding feast, apparently to demonstrate their wealth, but also to show that money had no hold over them. Most of my interlocutors around Madaba had a much more careful attitude

⁹ As they doubtless do in many times and places – for instance see Pepper *et al*’s (2009) analysis of the values of socially progressive and environmental conscious consumer choices in the US.

to wealth and managed their finances assiduously, but distaste for public meanness is to be avoided at all costs. This disposition towards wealth was explained by some as emerging from a nomadic past, where life was physically hard but also effortless. Once when making polite conversation with one of the few remaining pastoralists around Madaba, he asked me ‘isn’t the life here beautiful? Better than in the town’. I replied politely that his life was ‘beautiful, but it must be very hard’. He scoffed ‘not hard, very easy!’ He had many worries and physical discomforts, but little labour, he said, and most of that was to do with arranging sufficient water and animal feed, things he told me were only necessary because of land appropriation and the loss of water to the city. Most of the day he sat watching his animals, drinking tea and talking. In his and many others’ historical imagination the nomadic past was physically precarious but required little input or enterprise, and still less repetitive toil – the work of peasants and slaves. Herds and households flourished or failed with the will of God, or more prosaically the vagaries of climate and fluctuating prices dictated by distant forces. Wealth, where it was made, came from daring raiding, extracting *khuwa* payments from villagers, taking tolls from and escorting/extorting travellers, and from trade; all of which relied on building and managing a reputation or name. The maintenance of life depended on not eating too greedily from the herd, and for the most part meat was only eaten during occasions of hospitality (Palmer 1999, 2002).

This picture of nomadic life obscures the degree of stewardship and labour needed to support such a life; especially women’s labour, in milking animals, weaving tents, making furnishings, cooking, baking and often growing animal fodder. As William and Fidelity Lancaster (1987) point out, managing a herd successfully also involved considerable enterprise, carefully judging investments in new animals, from which stocks to breed, how many to sell etc., not to mention directing the labour of children, dependants and hired shepherds. Furthermore, any sense of a pre-market or anti-capitalist past of egalitarian and generous shaykhs must contend with the rise of slave-plantation-owning Shaykhs in the late nineteenth century (discussed in Chapter 3). Pastoralism and agriculture are now seen by many in nostalgic terms. These historical realities notwithstanding, in the popular imagination a ‘return to the land’ (the title of a particular 2011 protest in Amman discussed at the end of Chapter 6) seems to offer the potential for a life where the young can eat without ‘eating up’, and can progress into social adulthood.

5.3 Problematic Accumulation, ‘Whales’, and the Problem of the *Shabāb*

Passing on the bus through Um al-‘Amad one day with Hamid, he pointed to the vast mansion built by a prominent Sukhur military officer who had since gone into business – ‘his cousins still live in a two-room house, and he has done this for himself’. For many Bedouin, showing wealth through grand buildings and adornments is a direct refusal of normative social mores. Linda Layne (1994) writes that during her fieldwork in the 1970s and 1980s there was little differentiation in houses between Balga Bedouin and houses were not generally seen as expressions or representations of their occupants. The sole exception she tells us was the homes of shaykhs, which *were* representative of not just themselves and their reputation as individuals but in a sense the wider categories of ‘*ashīrah*’ through which they claimed their positions. Now mansions rise in Bedouin lands around Amman as pastoral land is sold off, and new smaller private homes (like, to some degree, those of Abu Salah’s sons) mimic architectural features from these mansions in reduced and simplified form, with pillared porticos and larger and ever-more elaborate guest-rooms. These houses are (unlike Khalid’s) often built where land is available cheaply, rather than in the natal setting. A friend once described an area of particularly grandiose examples as ‘the hill of the little pashas’ (*tal bushāt*). It is often said of such houses that the owners *shāyifn hālhum* – ‘see themselves’ (i.e. are self-regarding, self-important or arrogant).¹⁰ To become rich also requires becoming a social entrepreneur, carefully growing and accumulating a network of patronage through which to give and receive *wāstah*. But once rich, the power is gained to disregard some claims and obligations, to socially differentiate and isolate oneself from kin and neighbours. All around Amman, small flocks and tent clusters mark the places where Bedouin speculators make a claim to land, waiting to sell it when needed, surrounded by built-up land once owned by their parents and grand-parents and now sold. ‘It is better’ Samer once told me ‘to sell to outsiders.’ To sell to relatives or neighbours was, he felt, shameful.

Concerns about the very rich are also often expressed through a metaphor of consumption. From the idealised image of the hawk eating lightly, used to refer to noble Bedouin shaykhs, the metaphor turns to another animal, the bloated whale. Certain wealthy figures are sometimes called ‘whales’ (*hutti*), men who ‘eat up’ public resources

¹⁰ In most contexts, surely, the ideal is to be ‘seen’ by others, while not making it look like one wanted to be seen.

and national wealth indiscriminately.¹¹ When the latest IMF-induced efforts to reduce national spending through a tax rise and subsidy reduction in 2017 ended in an emergency loan from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf a contact on social media responded by saying ‘I pray it [i.e. the loan] will not all be eaten by whales’. When I asked him exactly who and what whales are in this sort of talk he told me ‘they [are those with] appetites that can’t ever be filled, they will always be hungry. And there isn’t much in Jordan – it is a poor desert country... so in the end, they’ll starve too’. This image of the whale in the desert is a striking one. Calling the wealthy and corrupt whales is a criticism of asocial accumulation and consumption, but it is not just the scale of consumption of whales that is troubling, but its unselective character, hoovering up whatever comes into their path. While the shaykh at his feast may well be among the corrupt, he is not quite a whale: his consumption is still presented as socially meaningful. Hirak protesters sometimes also called business figures whales when they wanted to indicate their greed.

Hirak protesters would often say that to be very rich in Jordan meant to be among the *fasādīyn* (the corrupt) as legitimate, socially responsible enterprises in their experience never flourished to the extent that the owners could build palaces and join the international ranks of the super-rich. Figures who own or have investments in former state industries, or who have sold such investments to foreign firms, are especially targeted. Perhaps as importantly, anyone who gains great wealth should leverage it for social ends, acknowledging the many and varied claims upon it by kin, friends and would-be clients. To use money for the opposite, to become private and isolated, was thus problematic. The roots of such money, especially the money made like the fortune of Mithqal al-Fayiz who many said had appropriated communal land for his own use, or from merchant-speculators who bought up land cheap in times of drought from poor pastoralists are often described as making *mal haram* (illicit money or wealth), which comes ‘without blessings’ and gives no joy.

It might seem that the spending of Khalid on securing a family legacy, the spending of the mansion-builder on himself and the potential spending of the desperate

¹¹ The origins of this animal metaphor is debated. It is used in the Bedouin poetry of Ahmed Hajaya and according to Tamplin (2018;314) it is a ‘traditional’ Bedouin metaphor for greed, linked to the Quranic tale of Yunis/Jonah. Meanwhile its use in Egypt (Nile Whales) to refer to businessmen who became enormously wealthy under Mubarak is attributed by Chekir and Diwan (2012) to Western sources, only then adopted and retranslated to Arabic. Either way, the metaphor of the all-consuming whale has become well established among Hirak activists.

young man without marriage prospects blowing his savings on a trip to a prostitute are separated by the different attitudes towards accumulation they portray. For Khalid and his family, accumulation tends to be temporary state of affairs on the route to pro-social (if hardly altruistic) goals, for the mansion builder, accumulation is an individual ascent to luxury, power and status, involving a cutting away of some ties, even as new networks are formed, and for the young man eating his salary, accumulation seems an impossibility bordering on irrelevance. However, spending wealth frivolously for one's personal pleasure, and accumulating wealth for one's personal status are both in their own ways distasteful, as both see wealth pass out of the social realm without achieving any widely acknowledged social 'good'. Eating and hoarding in a sense both destroy wealth and undermine social bonds. Focusing on accumulation on its own is thus misleading. Instead, what separates these three cases morally is the emphasis, or lack there-of, that they place on social ties and relationships. Bedouin poetry idealises the shaykh who is bankrupted by his generosity, pursuing the expansion of his social rather than material standing. This form of economic exemplarity obscures or denies mercantilist European principles of exchange, focusing instead on the unequal, asymmetrical and reputation-making power of the debt of hospitality that cannot be repaid (Dresch 1988, 1998). Far from encouraging egalitarianism, this form of exemplar encourages radical and persistent status difference.

The seemingly self-contained life of my wife and I, living in our own rented flat in a foreign country and receiving visitors out of choice rather than obligation was a source of fascination to many of our interlocutors, who expected to be living in or next to the parental home at our age, even if they had managed to find work and marry. Hamid often talked wistfully about moving in with me whenever my wife was away and did stay over occasionally. When he suggested he might take up the rent of our flat when we left with a friend, halving his commute (over four hours daily to and from Amman) his brothers intervened. They had supported him through his student days and his long period of unemployment and had helped him get a job. Now he wanted to eat his salary living like a foreigner rather than contributing to the family household.

All this is not to suggest that pro-social values are accepted unambiguously, especially by younger Jordanians. My friend Abdalaziz, manager of a government-funded youth centre in the Sukhur village of al-Jiza that worked to build employment prospects among teenagers and young adults, told me that everyone at the centre dreamed of getting rich and moving away from their families, but would never say so. I

was constantly surprised when even seemingly ‘made’ young men from respectable families expressed in confidence and away from their families that their dearest wish was to leave Jordan, at least for a time, and experience life away from their families. Yet many of these young men are also reliant economically and socially on the patronage of older relatives, and were often shocked when my wife and I told them how rarely we saw our own parents and siblings – one man who often nagged me for help to get a visa said he could not imagine not seeing his family at least once a week. Moving out for him on marriage, like for most Jordanian men meant moving to an upper floor of his parent’s house. Women move to their husband’s families, but still expect to visit regularly. For a married couple to move away together and rent their own house is still considered by many to be shocking, and for most couples would be financially reckless. The choice to cut away from extended kin networks, and still more extensive networks of patronage, and become a relational self-actualising individual and consumer of developmental paradigms, is in practice a doubtful one.

The growth of *Shabāb* (simply meaning ‘the young’) as a category with a political meaning (an ever-expanding category as marriage and homeownership are pushed later and later in life for men) is noticeable in political, journalistic and scholarly sources, increasingly applied to men of 35 and older. Youth unemployment is currently nearly 27% in Jordan (OECD, n.d.) and likely to be far higher among those in part-time education or living outside the statistical interest of the state in refugee communities. Priced-out social adulthood, the political problem of *shabāb* is portrayed as one of social reproduction; a theme of rupture in the social fabric and moral economy, connecting seemingly dissimilar experiences of decreasing certainty and stability with those of stuckedness and boredom.

5.4 Economic Subjectivities: boredom, stuckedness and gender in the demographic bulge

One day while sitting outside a coffeeshop I often visited just outside Madaba, owned by Nayif, Hamid’s maternal uncle (*khal*), I fell into conversation with Ghaleb, a businessman of Palestinian origin, who was curious about my research. After explaining my interest in Bani Sakhr political history the man scoffed, telling me I was in the right place to talk to Sukhr people. ‘*Wallah Badu* are always in the coffeeshop’ he complained. Nayif looked nonplussed and came and joined us. The businessman changed tack, but once Nayif left us he switched to perfect English. He soon reverted to

his former theme; in Madaba he said ‘they [Bedouin] don’t want a job. They want a chair. A chair in an office to drink coffee and read the paper and to meet and talk with their friends and cousins.’ This ‘chair’ he added angrily would then be treated as their personal property, to be held for life, providing a permanent pension, and could be transferred to or used to acquire another chair for their relatives. In Amman he told me he could find city boys, mostly of West-Bank or refugee origin, who would work 10 hours a day in shops, in the hope of saving up to start their own business, where they would work even harder.¹² ‘These guys here, they can’t do it’ he said, dismissively gesturing out of the coffeeshop to encompass Madaba.

Economic attitudes in Jordan are often mapped onto the public/private sector: East-Banker/West-Banker bifurcation (Gandolfo 2012). Yet many Bedouin have done it, and West-Bankers do not have a monopoly on self-exploitation. For instance, my interlocutor Badr Shammary helped manage a chain of co-owned shops in Madaba, helping Iraqi refugee relatives in the process by employing them as workers. Many Bedouin women also have opened hair and beauty salons in Madaba. In the face of structural adjustments and the reduction of the size of the state and the military, the developmental ideal is that the surplus labour force should find private sector employment, an outcome which the World Bank and others describe as requiring the overcoming of ‘cultural factors’ (Harrigan *et al.* 2006:290). In fact, for most the larger obstacle is doubtless access to capital, and in particular a willingness to use capital which others (especially close family) might have a claim on, for self-centred aims. Badr’s father and uncle had supported his shop as an opportunity to help their Iraqi relatives. But though Badr often talked about buying the premises outright he told me ‘if I ask my father for the money, he won’t have the money if my brother marries. I must wait’. This of course is not what banks, NGOs or economic reformers and advisors in Jordan would want him to do. For them, Ghaleb’s logic of selfish self-exploitation is favoured, an attitude that various microcredit and entrepreneurship-based development interventions aim to instil in their creation of ‘neoliberal subjects’ (Sukarieh 2016). Such subjecthood, no matter how enticing or desirable, is often in conflict with other imperatives, in many cases more practically essential for maintaining vital relationships.

¹² This justification of exploiting the most precarious by dangling the slim hope of entrepreneurial success might well seem a compelling argument for the existence of powerful networks of patronage to mediate between the individual and the national economy.

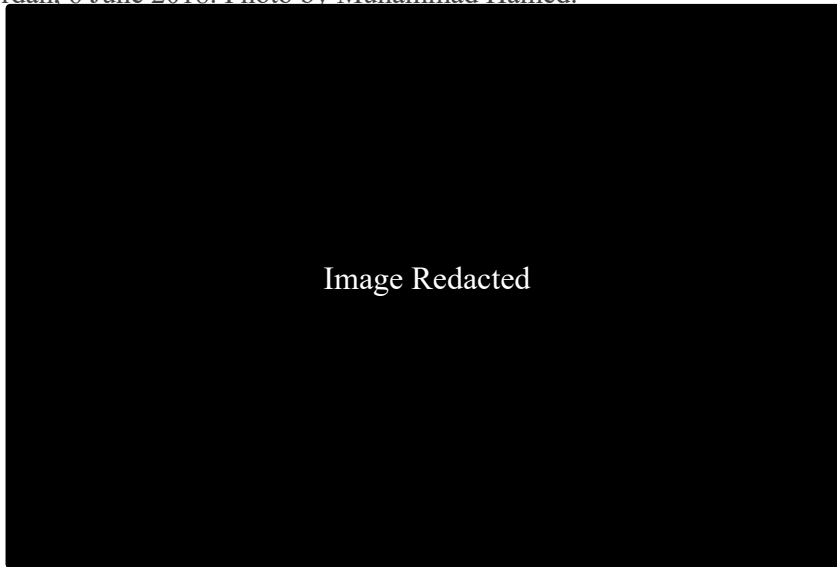
The opposition activist and former Bani Sakhr parliamentarian Hind al-Fayiz positively encouraged a transformation of Bedouin employment into private sector jobs and entrepreneurship – a perspective more often held by those with sufficient capital to make the process less daunting than it might be for others. For her, the private sector represents an escape from this economic dependence on the vicissitudes of the Hashemites and their entourage; a return, in a sense, to sovereignty. But where state- and kin-patronage are entangled, these jobs seem the only option and inescapable. Hamid said to me that to move out or away for a non-secure job would never be acceptable to his family, and would not allow him to marry. ‘I know I won’t go hungry’ Hamid said sadly, when talking of his brothers, but this dependence is a limbo for him, not an end-state.

On another occasion Hamid referred to life in his village as *aīsh bidun fursa* ‘life without opportunity’. In the end Hamid did get a government job, in part through Sukhur connections, filing in the Finance Ministry. Government work, as Hamid was told by his brothers, may pay less but is more honourable than opening a shop, as Badr (who was Hamid’s cousin) had done. Many others wait, looking for the elusive circumstances that will allow them to find permanent employment, in the meantime eating what little they have on smoking and drinking tea and coffee in the coffeehouses with friends much of the day, to escape the house.

‘Eating’ in this sense stands in for minimal life-sustaining subsistence, what Agamben (1998) terms ‘bare life’, especially talk of eating bread. I have already hinted at the metonymic as well as metaphorical quality of bread, standing for subsistence and also representing the wider political economic world of the subsidised bread-eating public. The language of subsistence remains, in Arabic as in most languages, the language through which labour is talked about – winning bread, making bread, sharing bread. ‘They are starving us’ was a constantly repeated utterance when the bread price doubled in January 2018. Bread, particularly the subsidised and standardised *khubz ‘araby* (a cheap, mass-produced flat-bread with a government-set price made with subsidised imported flour to a set recipe) as Martinez (2018) points out, is a key political symbol. Bread subsidies remains a source of unrest and as such bread and bakeries remain at the heart of the social contract and of ideas of just and benevolent

government.¹³ As at once a revered symbol of pious subsistence and a bare necessity, daily bread should be abundantly present but almost beyond notice. Historically ‘*aīsh* – ‘life’ was used as an alternative term for bread and cereal-based food in general (Palmer 2002). Some, like my friend Abdalaziz treat bread with piety, picking up thrown-out stale bread on the ground and placing it on a wall. Yet in contexts of hospitality guests are often told to not bother eating bread, to focus their appetites instead on meat.¹⁴

Figure 5.2: Protesters hold slogan-bearing bread in front of the Labour Union offices in Amman, Jordan, 6 June 2018. Photo by Muhammad Hamed.



As bread-as-life stands for subsistence consumption, it is morally opposed to excessive accumulation by the rich. Many Hirak protesters carried pieces of flatbread on which is they wrote political messages, such as *fasād=jua* – ‘corruption=hunger’ (as in Figure 5.2). Hirak leader Sabri Mash’allah at one meeting asked rhetorically that since bread prices were rising, and so bread consumption decreased, where was the excess going? ‘Eaten by the whales’ was his rhetorical answer. The meaning of bread hovers then between two polls. On the one hand, a representation of the social contract between rulers and ruled, of humble but virtuous sustenance and public life. On the one hand, of the life of the depoliticised subject of power, kept alive by the will of the sovereign via subsidised grain, and thus rendered permanently dependant. This in in contrast to the idealised pastoralist, living off their own herd and grain bought or extorted from villagers.

¹³ Grain riots have a long history in most Islamic cities (Goodwin 2001:114) and ensuring access to bread is the basis of benevolent government. To allow the market to determine grain and bread prices is thus fraught.

¹⁴ As Mary Douglas (1966) argued, things which symbolise a bare minimum for life can be simultaneously sacred and unvalourised.

For much of the twentieth century (and indeed before in some Muslim states), the ability to deliver subsidised bread to citizens was a marker of both the virtue and beneficence of the rulers, and also of their sovereignty, made concrete through social welfare given to dependents. As state employment and price subsidies have diminished, the state has sought to promote ideas of kinship associations and tribe as alternative forms of welfare, but ones that are inherently depoliticising. The opacity of such channels of support, where development money is given directly to cooperative family and tribal associations with central funds for the benefit of members, has further encouraged the generalised discourse and practice of *wāstah*, not perhaps so much a depoliticization, but a deferral of the political to a space outside of legitimate public gaze. As even the ‘bare life’ afforded to the urban poor via bread subsidies becomes more precarious, other ways of imagining the socio-political structure of the nation-state take on increased significance. This is reflected by the increased talk of social contracts in works of economic analysis. Riad al-Khoury, the Middle East Director of GeoEconomica in his 2019 economic brief mentions in the conclusion, after a relatively technocratic and quantitatively-focused report, that the positive economic metrics considered must be balanced against the fact that ‘Jordan’s existing internal political situation is poor and the country’s social contract unsustainable’ (al-Khoury 2019:5).

Such reports have been prophesising economic and political ferment in Jordan for decades – a revolt of the bread-eaters – and have thus far been disappointed. Like many supposedly unsustainable and unbearable situations, the economic situation in Jordan has proven surprisingly stable even as it declines. Talk of Jordan as on the brink gets at a fundamental tension in Jordan’s contemporary situation, which is consistently described as both stable and unsustainable. Public facing media often call Jordan *balad amaan wa alaamn* – ‘a country of safety and security’, and less flatteringly many expats and some English-speaking urbanites like to call it ‘the Hashemite Kingdom of boredom’, a place where nothing ever happens. Zachary Sheldon (2017) explores sentiments around Jordan’s stability among Iraqi refugees, who often describe their situation as ‘safe but not settled’ – a situation where bare life is guaranteed but where any movement towards permanence, prosperity or social reproduction seems blocked.

This sense of impending collapse paradoxically twinned with bored stuckedness is not a sentiment confined to the large and precarious refugee population but is found to various degrees amongst most people in the country. Ethnographically even quite short conversations (for instance with taxi drivers or shop-keepers) would often involve

expressions of concern over the economic situation. Khalid's brother Tariq operated a private minibus between the village of ar-Rama in the *Bādīyah* and Madaba, and after the rise in fuel prices meant he had to take on another route as well to stay profitable, doubling his working hours he told me 'there is so much pressure (*daghat*) on people, we can't follow (*lahaq* – i.e. 'cope with') it. It can't continue, we can't live. If one little thing happens, if I break down, '*khalas* [finished]' he said, chopping the air with his hand. Equally prominent is talk suggestive of a sense of what Ghassan Hage (2009) calls 'stuckedness' – a sense of endless repetition without anticipating successful transformation. Hamid told me often 'nothing changes – I will be here [i.e. sitting in his brothers' village house or in the coffeeshop] till I die'. At other times Hamid was extremely ambitious in his plans to learn English, to buy a car, to find work or to leave the country. There was however a yawning gap between his anticipatory desires, which do involve a degree of effortful work to bring the future about, and his sense of the potential of his actions to realise his hopes within the current system. The present situation is thus described as unendurable and precarious, but also strangely changeless. Neither imminent disaster nor any easement seems likely, rather a slowly narrowing range of possibilities and opportunities.

This is not to say the prevailing discourse is one of changelessness. The scale of historical change indeed is widely recognised. Many interlocutors had family members who could tell me of a time when money and waged labour were rare, and the idea of getting much richer fanciful. On one of my outings with Halima (the NGO manager and local politician) in Jabal Bani Hamida we visited the *mukhtar* (village dignitary) of Jadaydah, Rashid Abu Salīh al-Qa'ada. When discussing the problem of young people he said; 'Luck, war and good marriages were the only way things changed. My grandfather wanted good marriages for his children, to keep his herd. That is all. Now we want so much. But really, what my grandfather wanted, we don't have even that.' In Chapter 3 we saw how, despite such talk, over a century of land speculation and investment have left their mark, dominated by a narrow band of elite actors. The result has been disastrous for many. Ambivalent sentiments towards an imagined pre-growth past without too much effortful accumulation are important when set against a present wherever greater effort is needed to meet ever greater expectations for life and yet with decreasing chances of success.

As important as a sense of pressure is the widespread talk of boredom. Many things and situations were described to me as *mamul*, 'boring,' but for someone to be

‘bored’ – *malal* or *zahgān* – could contextually mean something far more existential, as Samuli Schielke (2015) also describes in his field site in Egypt. As in Schielke’s description of life in Nazlat al-Rayyis, I found many young men talked of boredom as a lack of belief in the meaningfulness or efficacy of action, and a frustration with the hollowness of schemes of improvement, both developmental and religious. ‘It is better to be bored in the coffeehouse than the office’ Hamid once told me, after he had just found work and had gathered with friends to watch a football match. Hamid’s boredom extended to attending prayers and fasting during Ramadan as well. Expressions of boredom in the village often precede a trip to Madaba or Amman, but young men there also often talk about boredom. When Hamid started working he was initially elated but within a few weeks was commiserating with others in such jobs about how boring it was. The defining feature of this boredom is not the repetitive quality of life, although this is talked about extensively; getting up at the same time, going to the same places, never having the money to break routine. Such repetitively familiar existences are not always boring, indeed they can be seen as meaningful and happy if they are imagined to be following a trajectory (Hage 2015). The problem faced by Hamid and others like him is not that life stays the same, but that it stays the same in ways it should not. As Ghassan Hage (2009) points out, the colloquial *shāmy* Arabic response to questions about how one is doing is normally *mashy* ‘walking’ – which also is used to mean ‘okay’. This motion is not necessarily linear progress and self-advancement, but rather at the minimum the unfolding of the different elements of a life in the correct order. In this context not being able to get a full time job, to marry, to have children, to buy a car and build a house represents an inability to become a full social person.

Boredom is not experienced by everyone in the same way or to the same degree. Boredom, as Schielke (2015) points out, is always gendered. Once when Osama, the Hirak activist, was complaining about how bored he was looking for work and going into the University to see his friends and doing a little work as an unofficial ‘research assistant’, his sister Samira said ‘you could always help us more at home if it tires you. I’m tired, we’re all tired and bored/fed up [*farfatāt ruwhi*]’ Osama gets paid about 3 JD (roughly £4) an hour for his work at the University, which often totals around 6 or 7 hours a week. After spending money on transport, coffee and cigarettes he has almost nothing to contribute to the household. His mother and sister meanwhile both work (as a teacher and a shop assistant respectively), and cover most of the grocery costs, while his father’s pension covers accommodation. Young men like Osama, who spend their time

waiting together outside the house, reproduce a certain youthful masculinity based on discontent and anger, coupled with an avoidance of the home.

Restlessness and being easily bored are contextually characteristics of intelligence and energy, along with joking. To not be bored suggests a lack of vigour and ambition. Yet this positive association is rarely extended in public discourse to women, implicitly casting these characteristics as masculine. To many Jordanians, long spells at home are not considered boring for women in the same way they are for men. Unmarried Jordanian women undertake an average of 17 hours of domestic work per week, increasing to 37-38 hours per week once married (Assaad *et al.* 2017:23).¹⁵ Despite the educational attainment of women in Jordan overtaking that of men in recent years,¹⁶ the burden of running the household limits their ability to take part in the labour market or other social activities.¹⁷ Efforts to boost female attainment are often treated as a threat to male employment.

Samira, speaking good English and studying towards a degree in translation, works in a menial but reliably waged role in a local relative's business, while Osama pursues work in the capital and in academia. She went on to rebuke him for spending all his time out doing nothing but talking and waiting, when she had to not only study and work but also help their mother at home. Often women have less opportunity to express boredom and face far more censure for saying anything negative in front of male kin and even older female relatives, while male friends often talked, even boasted, of their boredom and frustration.

In the villages many Bedouin young women face a similar set of dilemmas to young men, usually with even sharper consequences. Despite often having good degrees, options on graduation are limited by family expectations. Moving away, forming inappropriate friendships or in some cases even trying to find work meets with rebuke from relatives. For the last decade women have outnumbered men in the University of Jordan (Jansen 2006: 480) but have far lower employment prospects. The way many unmarried women are socially occluded outside their extended families

¹⁵This is not to suggest this disparity in housework is uniquely a feature of Jordan – similar levels are seen in many European nations.

¹⁶ World Bank statistics for 2017 show that the proportion of women completing secondary school education was 61% and for men 60% (World Bank 2019).

¹⁷ World Bank data for 2017 indicates that only 14% of women were engaged in the labour force compared to 64% of men, and only 15.4% of seats on the national parliament were held by women (World Bank 2019), most of these coming from 'quota' seats.

makes their dissatisfaction less visible than gangs of unemployed young men hanging around the streets, and therefore less overtly ‘political’. Similarly, normative economic expectations (like those in many places) cast the contribution of women and particularly female children as secondary to that of the primary male provider. Women will, it is presumed, stop or pause work once married, and at any rate will after that be contributing to another household.

The place of women then is often portrayed more as suffering than active subjects, experiencing vicariously the precarity of the male provider. However, the rising importance of women participating in employment, protest movements, and wider opposition politics (Ababneh 2016, 2018) is bringing more focus on the female experience of boredom and precarity directly. I had less access to this world of female boredom. The young women I got to know best were those with the most public lives, often Christians or those living in West Amman, who while often frustrated with elements of the patriarchal structures of the state, expected to have careers and to go out of the house at will, even after marriage. Even then, it was often arranged so they worked with people known to their family, so that they would not be entirely among strangers, and so that there would be a male relative on hand to ‘protect’ and to monitor them. My wife became friends with a cousin of Hamid’s in the village of Um al-Walid, Rashīdah, a chemical engineering graduate from a top university. She wanted to apply for a job in the Jordanian Petroleum Board. Her family refused, saying that it was too far away from her home (being in a distant area of Amman) and that they had no experience or contacts in this institution or area of the economy. She would be with social strangers, something they would be reluctant to accept even for a son. The way she described it was ‘they want to know there is someone there to watch me’.

In a conversation about this situation with our friend in Amman, Said, he said ‘of course, these sort of families from the Bedouin villages, they won’t send a daughter to work in an office unless there is someone to keep their *‘ird* [the sexualised honour of women]’. This association of Bedouin with especially conservative gender practices is to some degree a recent one; as Chatty (2000) and Palmer (2002) point out, while women and men certainly had delineated roles among Arab nomadic pastoralists, most outsiders viewed women in these societies as relatively independent compared to peasant or urban women; owning their own livestock and the family tent, hosting guests and, when older, taking part to some degree in political life. Now as being Bedouin becomes less about nomadic pastoralism and more about various political and identity

claims, this has shifted, and the idiom of honour has if anything become more pronounced. For Rashīda's family her degree was a way of increasing her *mahr* (bride-wealth), but as she became unhappy and withdrawn, refusing marriage offers, they began to curse her studying. They hoped she would marry within the village of Um al-Walid and various matches with parallel cousins were presented, which Rashīda often discussed with my wife, stating she did not want any of them, but felt she could not keep refusing without making trouble for her family. 'I want to travel, like you and your husband, but really I know this is impossible, it will never be for me'.

Attitudes to female work are also informed by long-standing associations with poverty, where the ability to 'shield' the women of a family from visible agricultural labour was associated with status. Once a mark of certain elite lineages, merchants and Islamic scholars, the nature of the contemporary economy has allowed a far wider segment of the population to aspire to female seclusion. 'People will talk, *y'ani*, they will say "his family is so poor he must send his wife out into the fields"' Halima told me, when explaining why women in her generation had helped a great deal with looking after flocks and crops, but that this was declining in recent years. In some contexts, women's economic role has in fact decreased. The women I interviewed through Halima in Jabal Bani Hamida were mostly relatively poor older married women currently or formerly working for Halima's weaving cooperative. In some cases these women were the primary earners in their households, but they had almost all experienced some hostility from their families at first to working, even though the weavers (as opposed to dyers, finishers and administrative staff) worked in their own homes. The unmonetised labour of women in a subsistence economy shepherding, milking and weaving has slowly given way to an ideal of seclusion and inactivity and a reality of unrewarded cooking and childcare, even as women are becoming more educated than their male counterparts.

Halima told me the NGO was still sometimes criticised for only providing employment for women. 'Some men, the older ones, they say, it is the man who provides, if he cannot shame on him. So they say, first find jobs for the man, for the father, then worry about the mother and daughters later.' Halima has experienced hostility in her own career; 'at first all was shame... If I drove myself it was 'shame on you', if someone drove me '*haram*, sitting with a man, when I went to council meetings,

haram, sitting with men’.¹⁸ In time though, tireless campaigning, visiting families and sitting with the shaykhs and *mukhtars* in the villages has slowly won allies for her project, and she is now a local councillor and one of the most influential people in the district, visited, as shaykh Ghazi Abu Qa’ūd put it, ‘like a shaykh’ herself, for *wāstah*, patronage and advice. But, as she points out, focusing too much on women in particular can still be alienating; ‘All the women weavers who work for the project, most of them would say, *awal ishy* [the first thing] is security of livelihood for the family.’ Some of these women, who I was introduced to with my wife, bring in the only money in the family, and some of the husbands, as Halima put it would ‘rather have nothing than be paid by their wives’. Less public, and so less overtly political, the deeply felt frustrations and disappointments of women in the same setting are not merely an extension of those of their male kin, but nor are they easily disentangled from the wider social and economic setting, especially when state-encouraged prevailing norms rhetorically stress the centrality of the extended family.

Such boredom also intersects with new types of sociality. Young people meet across pre-existing networks at university, even to some degree across gender. While many stay in groups based on connections from back home, others do not. During leisure time too, escaping not just the family but the sociality of pre-existing networks dominated by older relatives becomes desirable. The established coffeeshops are still visited, but newer-style cafes and shops are also used, as are video-game cafes. If money is tight, just walking around smoking, or going to shops owned by friends is common. When I asked Badr why we went to a small, less popular café, away from the centre of Madaba, rather than Quriyah where his brother went he said: ‘I like to feel free you know. I like to talk. There, I have to watch what I say, I have to keep quiet, I have to always say “yes of course, you’re right, uncle (*lāzim ahky ‘t’abān ma’k al-hag ‘amy*)”’. Badr and his friends often spent considerable time in video-game cafes, playing various first-person-shooter games together. The experience of new forms of sociality are still gendered. Badr’s sisters had no expectation of visiting cafes (although girls from families with different practices of gendering sometimes did); rather going to a different set of shops and spaces (the houses of friends, hairdressers, occasionally malls) often during much more limited windows of free time. The behaviour of leisured and

¹⁸ This latter point, about sitting in council meetings with all men has been given as a ‘conservative’ justification for women’s quotas – there must be at least two women on such councils, so that no woman sits ‘alone’ on them.

consuming women, of the sort Sara Tobin (2012) describes going to Starbucks in her ethnographic account of the 2011 protests, are seen by many of my Bedouin interlocutors as demonstrative of cultural difference between them and the cosmopolitan ways of the rich and of West Amman.¹⁹

Drinking and smoking cannabis are particularly gendered and extreme forms of counter-sociality. This largely-male self-consciously transgressive and generally secretive activity, for Muslims strictly *haram* and the subject of state disapproval, is at times explained, along with sensations of boredom, as a result of the restlessness and excessive appetites of young men, a practice they will grow out of as they age and calm down, along with excessive sexual desire. Those concerned about such practices often explicitly explain them as a reaction to the boredom and despair felt by the young. To be a *shārib* (drinker) was for most of my interlocutors contextually normal for young, unmarried men; a phase they went through and grew out of without it ever being witnessed, condemned or condoned by their older relatives, and which while formally illicit, is described as stemming from *dam khafif* – ‘light blood’, an excess of joviality and high spirits which was ‘manly’ and to some at least appropriate. Such associations are those brought forth by the Bani Sakhr’s occasional epithet of ‘the red-eyed’; although actually referring to their tempers and quickness to anger, being red-eyed is a widely known side-effect of drinking and taking drugs. While not pious or strictly moral behaviour, such activities do carry with them associations of wildness, strength and personal autonomy that are not displeasing to some Sukhur men.

Madaba, unlike some *Bādīyah* regions to the south-east, has a large number of liquor stores because of its Christian population. Young men would buy alcohol (strong beer, araq, whisky and vodka) from stores, often at night when less likely to be observed. Then, in small groups, they would drive out to the countryside or the desert, and sit drinking, keeping bottles hidden, and throwing them away into fields afterwards. Beer cans and old spirits bottles are a ubiquitous part of Jordan’s rubbish, even in conservative areas. Drinking is context-dependent. In one case, an interlocutor who in another context had warned me against talking to a certain individual as they were a drinker, himself drank when a mutual friend turned up with alcohol, for which he was the subject of some joking, as he had recently returned from pilgrimage to Mecca. I was surprised to find out how many interlocutors had tried alcohol at some point, even when

¹⁹ Even in Madaba, certain cafés (normally more expensive ones) were frequented by young women drinking soft-drinks and smoking *‘argilah*.

presenting themselves as serious-minded and pious. Equally surprising was their willingness to admit this to me, once a relationship was established and it was known I drank occasionally.

However this social sphere, widely acknowledged to exist in general, was of necessity obscured if not out-right denied in most contexts. Older men who told me they knew of drinking and were not overly concerned by it as long as young men were careful and circumspect, would always deny any of their sons were involved. There is an extensive anthropological literature on all-male drinking, particularly in settings where it risks censure from age-based hierarchies, often focusing on its ambivalent character in constructions of honourable and respectable masculinity (for instance, Marsden 2007, Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991). For my interlocutors, drinking was always done in opposition to the family, a secret from not only fathers but generally also older brothers, and most of all, from female kin. Rayan told me it was something he did now, and thought his elder brother had done (although they had never talked about it) but would stop upon marriage. To drink in front of, or to have one’s drinking exposed to, women, especially related women (one’s *mahram*), would be a very serious cause of shame and loss of reputation. For a woman to drink would be even more shocking. That upper-class women, even those from Bedouin families, move in social circles where mixed-gendered gatherings and drinking is permissible is widely known but dismissed as behaviour that does not concern them. ‘The culture is different for them’ Abdalaziz told me with a shrug. Some of my closest contacts, drinkers themselves, knew that my wife would drink alcohol with me, but this strange behaviour was just part of our foreignness. Drinking was an alternative mode of sociality during times of boredom, and among regular rather than occasional drinkers in my acquaintance, it had less to do with enjoyment or celebrating than dealing with disturbing and negative emotional states. Evenings given over solely to drinking were treated as palliative than pleasurable. As Hamid once said, when saying he wanted to drink: ‘I want to go crazy. I want to forget’.

These bored youths are, according to some accounts, the victims of something amounting to demographic determinism. Some scholars such as Proudfoot (2017) link such discourses, emphasised in many narratives of the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ to the broader literature on ‘surplus people’ (see for instance Ferguson 2013, Li 2014). The simple notion of often over-educated ‘surplus youth’ entering an economy unable to adequately accommodate them, offering neither sufficient new opportunities nor the

minimal ability to reproduce the world of their parents, has become a common narrative within and especially beyond anthropology. There is clearly some cause for talk of a demographic bulge in the region, and with it perhaps the emergence of something of an intersubjectivity; a shared experience of trying to become an adult in a time of expanding populations and contracting employment. In the last three decades, the population of the Arabic-speaking countries has together increased two-fold, an increase of 2-2.5% annually (Piven 2010). But as Proudfoot (2017) points out, demography in this case should not be treated as an apolitical and natural cause of surplus. The various specific situations young people find themselves in are the result of policy decisions.

During the initial optimism of the Arab Spring, Samir and Roseanne Khalaf (2011:9) saw in the image of youthful protesters a symbol of hope and renewal, anticipating in the work of activists and scholars ‘alternative “softer” venues for resistance’ to realise emancipatory goals. This marked a shift from pessimistic works, treating demography as inescapable doom (Osman 2006).²⁰ For others, such as Roberts (in Roberts *et al.* 2016) demographic determinacy is rejected in favour of institutional economics; the demographic explosion, and the list of resulting psycho-social malaises Osman (2006) lists are reversed in terms of cause and effect, becoming twin symptoms of state failure and stressors in the face wider forces of capitalism or even of modernity, and in particular an experience of these forces unmediated by strong institutions fostering trust that extends beyond socially-known individuals, and a civil society capable of counteracting the state (all propositions as doubtful in putatively-successful ‘modern’ societies as they are ill-defined in practice; as discussed in Section 4.3). For Roberts (*ibid.*), mass protest and resistance without such institutional foundations for reform seems doomed to repetitive failure. Both these narratives, of institutional failure and demographic-doom, are clearly hopelessly over-deterministic, and obscure as much as they reveal, not least the variety of ways dissatisfied youths envisage their situation and their projects to better it. These experiences of anticipation emerge from a specific political economy, emerging out of economic crisis and neoliberal reform, not simple demography. This political economy is, as we have seen, at least in part pushed by the developmental actors who seek to fix the institutional weaknesses Roberts (*ibid.*) focuses on. I therefore abandon these deterministic accounts, and engage with a more

²⁰ Tarik Osman (2006:203) describes the transformation of Egyptian Society into a ‘pyramid – extremely narrow at the top and enormously wide at the bottom’ with limited conduits between the generations.

specific strand of anthropological literature that has largely emerged from work in the Middle East and Africa, that on ‘waithood’.

5.5 Waithood and the ‘Not-Yet’

Many casual conversations between young men in Madaba involved questions about whether future hopes and events had come to pass; ‘have you found work?’, ‘have you opened up your business yet?’, ‘have you got a university place?’, ‘have you got a visa?’, ‘have you met with [name of an important *wāstah* contact from whom a favour is expected]?’ . More often than not, the reply was a shrug and ‘*ma lissa* [not yet]’ often followed by ‘*insha’allah bukra/garīban*’ (tomorrow/soon if God wills it). The anthropology of the ‘not-yet’, as Möller (2017) points out, is a recurring theme in studies of the so-called ‘demographic bulge’ in the Middle East and North Africa. Together with ‘waithood’ it suggests a widespread subjectivity or orientation towards the future. Such literature engages with, but somewhat diverges from, the general anthropological interest in anticipation and the future (see for instance Stephan and Flaherty 2019), via its emphasis on the absence rather than the presence of the future in the imaginaries of ethnographic subjects. I engage with this analytical concept in order to examine what sort of political and historical claims emerge out of using such a term.

A portmanteau of ‘waiting’ and ‘adulthood’, ‘waithood’ has become a useful heuristic emerging out of sociological and anthropological work on Africa and the Middle East, gaining much traction since 2010. Singerman (2007) defines it in the context of work on delayed marriage and reduced economic participation in Syria and Egypt as ‘a kind of prolonged adolescence’, and ‘the bewildering time in which large proportions of youth spend their best years waiting’. Some anthropologists have drawn attention to an emergent stage between adolescence and full incorporation into adulthood (Masquelier 2013, Hansen 2005, Singerman 2007, and Schielke 2015) especially prominent in contexts where IMF-led structural adjustment has reduced state support, and where market forces have disrupted the political economic foundations of social life. Periods of enforced waiting and passivity are in these accounts no longer exceptional but an increasingly anticipated but still problematic period following graduation from high school or university without clear end, where normative rites of passage, such as marriage, having children, setting up a household and taking over family land or businesses are deferred indefinitely. Menoret (2014) in his analysis of youth protest and dissatisfaction in Riyadh, expressed through joyriding on the

enormous, empty highways of the car-centric capital, begins with explaining why his interlocutors kept saying *ana tufshān* ‘I despair/it sucks’ – also something my interlocutors frequently said, influenced in part by *Khaliji* (‘of the Gulf’) music and popular youth culture.

As Joseph (2013) and Chatty (2010b) have pointed out, the idea of anthropologists studying ‘youth’ for many remains problematic, seeming as it does to presuppose a category emerging from the work of demographers and sociologists, working within their own specific frameworks, a unicultural idea of adolescence not borne out by ethnographic example. To many anthropologists it once would have seemed an unwieldy and odd division of the social. However, as Joseph (*ibid.*) also makes clear, the study of ‘youth’ in the Arab world is focused not on youth as a universal but within a specific context. The concept of waithood therefore remains sensitive to local variations. The use of waithood by scholars working on Palestine reflects the more severe restraints on movement and economic participation, intersecting with wider analyses of anticipation and stuckedness in daily life under conditions of occupation and settler-colonial expansion (Hamman 2011, MacEvoy-Levy 2014). As Joseph points out (2013:106) many young people across the Arab world have also been shaped by a common experience of growing up at risk of violence and displacement, making a sense of stability in which to progress illusive and anticipation of the future especially difficult. Joseph’s particular question (2013:119) ‘how does a society raise children for active citizenship when the state and civil society have been shattered?’ has its own problematic analytics which need unpacking (especially around the state and civil society), but at least grounds the idea of youth within specific historical circumstances. For Joseph waithood has occurred through a failure of the nation-state and its economic promises; education and the economy have not prepared places for newly economically active youths. In Jordan meanwhile the problem is frequently directed at the more localised, interiorised and putatively-cultural forces of norms, expectations and family, only tangentially intersecting with the wider concerns and pan-regional sentiments, but still grounded in a somewhat shared experience of worsening unemployment, economic hardship and instability.

For women waithood is often even more internalised, as will be clear from the brief account of Samira’s and Rashīda’s frustrations above. Much of the literature on waithood proclaims it to be a phenomenon affecting young men and women, but implicitly focusses on the normative experience of men (as Singerman 2007 points out).

In many instances female participation in agriculture and domestic production has become circumscribed in very recent years, in part as a result of a decrease in domestic production, and the greater ease of segregation in larger permanent houses (Layne 1994, Hughes 2015).

Links can and are made to the supposed general crisis of ‘masculinity’ in urbanising settings that no longer require the forms of labour often most respected (see Menoret 2014). The dark shadow of Khalaf and Khalaf’s (2011) optimistic account of youth protest is the horrific image of thwarted masculinity and pride that the media have made of Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation in Tunis in 2010. Moral teleologies of masculinity no doubt structure the lives of inmates in waithood, as they do those of failing would-be patriarchs like Boouazzi. The heuristic ‘waithood’, which is largely deployed only in works on the Global South, has some parallels with sociologist Michael Kimmel’s (2008) analysis of delayed adulthood and thwarted entitlement for some young educated urban men in North America, which he terms ‘guyland’. While ‘guyland’ is also linked with certain types of brittle masculinity, political dissatisfaction, extremism and protest, it is premised upon normative expectations and a political-economic background that is very different to that in the Arabic-speaking countries. That the young men Kimmel studies live together in ‘perpetual college’ defies heteronormative partnership and financial and domestic independence, but in other ways conforms with expectations that offspring move away after completing their education. Hamid, as mentioned already, often talked wistfully of living with other young friends in a similar position but was discouraged.

Returning to the concept of ‘eating’, the bored, stuck, waiting *shabāb* as a discursive category and type of subject are thus at once greedy, feckless ‘eaters’, eating up the patrimony of their fathers through their idleness, and at the same time are structurally in the position of the consumed, the ‘eaten’ as exploitable and precarious individuals unable to follow a normative path or to forge new ones, more reliant on, and vulnerable and fully-subject to, the state (it is imagined) than previous generations. It is important though to note that this reading is one among many. It is a reading of, and a perspective coming from, the downwardly-mobile but not yet down-and-out, peri-urban or rural-dwelling East-Banker youth. The enforced passivity of waithood chimes to some degree with Ghalib’s remarks around the desire for a ‘chair’, although for my young interlocutors like Hamid to whom the idea of waithood seems most applicable, various alternatives to passivity and long-term plans for change were considered if not

quite anticipated. Hamid dreamed of a life close to his family, but with money independent of them, and the ability to go away or see friends without interference. As such independent wealth seemed unlikely to be forthcoming the tension between intimacy and individuated independence never had to be resolved.

In the private and Sukkur-dominated University of Isra, where Hamid, Omar, Khalil and Rayan all went, almost everyone wanted to know if I could get them visas to the UK. Emigration is an obvious if difficult solution to waithood. The solution here is an exterior intervention to a circular and closed situation. For others, like Osama and the Bani Hamida *shabāb*, protesting was a response and solution to enforced passivity, despair and boredom as much as it was designed to bring about specific instrumental goals – a theme I will return to in the next chapter. It created amity and a grand cause and an extra-domestic social space. I now turn to a further type of response to the problem of precarious waithood and dilemma-induced stuckness; one which like immigration or revolution comes from outside the immediate everyday setting, with its discursively closed political economy. This is the widespread belief in hidden treasure and the pass-time of treasure-hunting.

5.6 Seeking Buried Treasure

Effortful and entrepreneurial success often seemed a doubtful prospect to young men like my friend Hamid, but so did a life of waiting around and subservience to older kin and to the dwindling security and prestige of government work. Instead, some people dream of sudden, serendipitous wealth. As such, searching land near rumoured ancient tombs and known archaeological sites for hidden treasure has become very popular. This is despite religious disapproval of treasure-hunting, as both a feckless activity and, through association with spirits and the pre-Islamic past, spiritually dangerous.²¹ Many people, especially young unemployed men with time on their hands and a normative gendered expectation that they spend much of each day outside of the home, will go digging in old cemeteries or under stone walls in the search for gold, sometimes deploying metal detectors and even mechanical diggers, but more frequently just with shovels.

21 There are a number of hadith that deal with *rikāz* (hidden treasure), stating that pre-Islamic treasure can only be made safe to claim by donating one fifth of its value to charity. At other times hidden treasure is used as a metaphor for God and for faith. There are also a number of pious stories, often very similar to some known in Europe, about the futility of looking for hidden treasure abroad and then finding it at home (sometimes the ‘treasure’ being a ploughed field the feckless searchers dig up in their search, which they then plant, learning the benefits of agricultural toil).

It is not only young men who treasure-seek. During an interview with an elderly widow in Jabal Bani Hamida, Um Ahmed, she broke off distractedly from talk of history to instead say ‘you know about history. There are signs here, from Roman times. Do you think there’s gold?’ We responded noncommittally, but were marched out onto her land to look at various supposedly Roman oil or grape presses and wells. At each one she would ask us if we thought there was gold, and would occasionally ask us to try digging. Finally Halima, who had introduced us and now re-joined us became angry. ‘*Yallah* Um Ahmed, they are not here for your treasure but to learn about the history’. She firmly dragged us away, while Um Ahmed angrily and tearfully begged us to come back and help her. We were shocked by this, but Halima shrugged it off. ‘Ah it is a curse on people, this treasure business. They cannot get the idea out of their heads. She was a sensible woman, a quiet woman... but she had some bad fortune, an accident. Now she talks and talks, always about gold’.

I personally saw numerous pictures of coins, rusted knives and old jewellery. Rumours of such occurrences, however rare, spread extremely widely and quickly. When it became known that my wife was volunteering with an archaeological project, requests for advice on where to dig became unending and copper Roman coins and bits of ceramic were often brought to us, and we were asked to suggest a valuation – we politely demurred. Her work, which included assessing the potential damage done by looting, put her in an occasionally difficult position, as interlocutors boasted of their looting exploits and showed pictures of their finds. Often the goods they sold, they told us, made their way to museums eventually, so they did not see the acts as harmful, but it also seemed the value of these items beyond their economic worth as precious materials or as objects that might attract tourists and collectors, was not rated highly. In Jordan things from the *Jahaliyah*, the pre-Islamic ‘time of ignorance’, are treated with ambivalence. The belief in the ubiquity of buried treasure in Jordan – a hidden patrimony of wealth from a seemingly devalued past, is entangled with Jordan’s current reliance on tourism and use of key sites like Petra as national symbols.

For those down on their luck, appealing stories abound of those who made sudden unexpected fortunes through finding treasure when they were in need, some of which (as Shryock 2019b points out) have been circulating in various forms for

centuries.²² More recently, it has become a widespread trope that Bedouin are ‘no good’ at business or commerce, and so need to find patrons, or in some other way strike lucky. One common belief is that the Turks, when they retreated from Syria in the First World War, left stashes of gold currency behind which they couldn’t move out fast enough. Other stories involve the gold paid by both Ottomans and British agents to particular shaykhs to secure their loyalty, much of which apparently went missing (Saunders and Faulkner 2009), as well as ancient gold, from Roman and pre-Roman tombs. These stories have become mixed with another genre about magical (*dhahab sahay*) or cursed (*dhahab lu’an*) gold found in ancient ruined pre-Islamic sites, often associated with jinn, snakes and hidden springs of water, revealed through signs on the rocks, about which much information circulates but little seems to be agreed. There are stories of gold from ancient Israelites, from the ‘disappeared Arabs’ mentioned in the Qur’an, from Romans and Crusaders. Some sites like the Umayyad palace ruins in Um al-Walid, where the Dahamshah have resisted heritage registration with the Ministry of Antiquities, are now dotted with looting pits. Hardly a grave remains unopened in the ancient cemetery outside Um al-Walid (despite the fact at least some of the graves there are likely to be those of early Muslims).

Those interested in such matters share and discuss an entire field of oral knowledge. This includes information gleaned from archaeological books and students about the location of archaeological sites, as well as recommendations about how to get hold of and operate the best metal detectors, how best to excavate or blast with explosives without damaging artefacts. It also includes seemingly more esoteric and arcane knowledge. In conversations with treasure-hunters, I was told of techniques for revealing signs of gold and circumvent its guardians (often in the form of snakes and scorpions). Treasure-hunters point to *ibār* (‘signs’) such as snakes and birds, as well as ancient rock symbols.²³ There is even, I was told, a small number of professional diviners who treasure hunters employ.

On one occasion, while eating dinner with my friend Hamuda Abu Slayah, his brother and his brother’s friend, Mahmud, arrived from the coffeeshop to join us. Mahmud started showing us some pictures on his phone of a pit he had sunk near

²² Volney (1987) also shows examples of European travellers in the nineteenth century being told many tails of hidden gold in the region – a theme he links to widespread preferences for wealth extraction through predation (raiding, tribute) or good fortune (the increase of herds) rather than effortful toil or enterprise.

²³ Rock symbols do exist in large numbers in Jordan, often where water might be found at different times, as well as who used and guarded wells and landscape features (Jobling 1993).

Mukawir, a Byzantine religious site, to find treasure. He explained that although he had not yet found anything, his friend, who had worked on a construction site, had found some old gold jewellery. Hamuda’s brother became excited at the idea, and pointed out that through his own work on a construction site he had access to a mechanical digger. But before he committed to the project, he wanted to know – is such work dangerous? Mahmud told him it could be. Some old graves or burials were protected by jinn. They would sometimes whisper to one to stop digging. He had heard of one man who had carried on digging after all his companions stopped, who was found dead from a heart attack. Sometimes pits and tunnels collapse, he said, sometimes because of jinn. However, he said, he knew the correct Qur’anic recitations to make to ward off such malevolent interference. After Mahmud left the Abu Slayah brothers remained unconvinced about going treasure-hunting. ‘Always, if you work on a construction site, people want to get to know you, because you might have heard of a find. By God it annoys me sometimes.’ Builders in Abdoun who gossiped recently about a Roman trove were, he told me, fired for having done so, as the Ministry of Antiquities seeks to limit the huge damage done every year by looters, who commonly break into construction sites as well as archaeological sites, to try their luck.

This sort of talk, crossing my own notions of the practical and the transcendent, also extended into the question of who was likely to find treasure. One day at a coffeehouse in Madaba I asked Marwan what made some treasure hunters successful. Marwan worked as a teacher in Um ar-Rassas, opposite a large, ruined Byzantine city which is often the target of treasure hunters. ‘Those who succeed are those who are best able to read the signs’ he said. I pushed him as to what made a good reader of signs. He shrugged. ‘I don’t believe in these things, but I do know people who have found gold. Some people have *haẓ* (luck)’ he said. He’d recently talked to me about the concepts of *mal m’a al-barakāt wamal harām* (‘wealth with blessings and forbidden wealth’); categories of money that some believe determine the fate of the owner. I asked him if this was related; was *haẓ* related to *barakāt* (‘blessings’ – in this context spiritual gifts and abilities coming from God)? He told me that sometimes someone with *barakāt* might find treasure because God wanted to reward them for their good deeds and piety. But *haẓ*, which like everything ultimately came from God and was willed by him, was not always a positive corollary of personal piety, as *barakāt* tend to be. It was, I began to sense, a more ambivalent category, which gave success, vital energy and restlessness to those possessing it in large quantities, but which might abandon the same people to

their doom at a later date. *Haz*, in this sense, was a property certain people, like treasure-hunters, sought to cultivate and to associate with themselves (often through telling stories of their success).²⁴

5.7 Images of the Good

I have described how young people I knew talked about and reacted to dilemmas faced in reproducing a meaningful social life in current conditions. To conceive of and articulate such dilemmas relies upon certain normative understandings of what social life is or should be. I have already suggested that boredom and anticipation rest on images of what life should be like. Much recent anthropology might see this in terms of values (for instance see Robbins 2013). Instead, reflecting the genuine uncertainty experienced by my interlocutors about how to realise desired futures, I suggest these normative understandings can best be seen as ‘images of the good’. This is a term with a complex anthropological history, but which has the advantage of recognising the plural, ephemeral, changeable, and often imaginary and unrealisable nature of many normative understandings and future imaginings. An image of the good might only be glimpsed partially, and might soon fade from view. There are times when interlocutors desired marriage and a secure job on their parent’s terms, reproducing a life of social obligations and reputation-building in the village and times when they dreamed of making a fortune or leaving their villages and Jordan, perhaps forever. Osama equivocated between pursuing his dreams of revolution, desiring to retreat into agriculture and pastoralism on his family land near the Dead Sea, and seeking clerical jobs in the state sector. I contend these changing feelings, which must be common to almost all people at almost all times and places to degrees, reflect not quite competing but often contradictory and partially exclusive images of what a meaningful, successful and/or pleasurable life consists of, and how it relates to others and wider social worlds. Fears of senseless eating and of being eaten, of wanting to sell land and become rich while cursing land sales, or decrying looting and the fecklessness of treasure hunting while secretly hoping for gold, reflect the dilemmas which arise from these images.

²⁴ *Haz* can also be a property of entities such as a lineage, an ‘*ashīrah*’ or even a people – a property that may desert the holders, leading to their destructions. Such a process is often imagined as being the mechanism by which God destroyed sinful former peoples. The *haz* of the Thamud, pharaoh and the people of ‘Iram of the columns’, mentioned as those destroyed by God in the Qur’an (89:6-14), is said by many to have been withdrawn by God.

More importantly than this experiential usage for my analysis, the idea of images of the good suggests ways in which people perceive, interact with and reproduce wider political and moral economies. Talk of bread, whales and buried treasure suggest, in different ways, images of a limited economy with extraneous wealth from outside the system of everyday moral economy of giving, exchanging and accumulating. This evokes some intriguing anthropological comparisons. Shryock (2019b) in his analysis of the potential for a counter-exchange logic of ‘keeping to oneself’ (as opposed to the anthropological interest in Maussian rules of exchange and reciprocity) examines a series of oral-historical narratives where the ascent of shaykhly lineages is traced to sudden discoveries of treasure.²⁵ It is hardly surprising others who have grown up on such stories hope such a reversal might happen to them in these precarious and yet boring times. It is also, crucially, a way of accounting for an obvious inequality; the wealth and power of some shaykhs in a world of mostly poor but ‘prickly’ herders, sensitive and resistant to differences in status and in honour. It removes the notion that the ‘Adwan has stolen or taken more of their fair share, instead relying on the intercession of destiny. Similarly in my fieldwork some like Um Ahmed held a strong sense that the seemingly unlikely, unlucky or downtrodden might suddenly find treasure.

Themes of treasure often turn up in ethnographic examinations of the moral economy of certain ‘peasant societies’, correlated supposedly with other values such as frugality and distrust of displays of unequal wealth; a moral economy emphasising stasis. In Jordan, economic change has been rapid and far-reaching, and many different visions of how to react to wealth compete. Yet important points of comparison to this older anthropological trope are worth exploring. Notably, George Foster (1965) made this connection during fieldwork in Tzintzuntzan in Mexico the basis for arguing for a cognitive integrating principle at work among many peasant societies that he terms ‘the

²⁵ Shryock (2019b) focuses on the story of Hamdan, founder of the ‘Adwan, a shaykhly lineage who with associated vassals, allies and confederates came to dominate the Balga region from the 17th-18th centuries as a *qabīlah*. Hamdan, a client and protégé of Mahfuz as-Sardi, the then-dominant political figure in the Balga, takes part in a raid against the Turks on behalf of the Mahfuz, but he is belittled and cheated of his share of the loot by his patron, who awards him only a hobbled she-camel, laughing at his indignation and indignity. The she-camel, unbeknownst to them all turns out to have saddlebags filled with gold, carrying the Turk’s bullion, allowing him in time to usurp his ungenerous master, and take his power. The *haż* of Hamdan falls like thunderstroke, from the outside, as unexpected treasure. This story of the breaking-down of a relationship between patron and protégée, or host and guest, mirrors the logic of the story Abdalaziz told me of the origins of the Dahamshah above, where al-Dahamshah took in al-Fayiz, an orphan in the desert, who eventually usurped him founding the lineage of the paramount shaykhs of the Sukhur.

image of the limited good', where all manner of life-sustaining resources are limited and unexpandable. Foster (1965:296) contends that 'peasants view their social, economic, and natural universes, their total environment, as one in which all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honor, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety, *exist in finite quantity and are always in short supply*'. As such, signs of success suggest harm to someone else. Where this principle becomes widely recognised, Foster argues, belief in extraneous sources of wealth and power proliferate as ways of 'tapping resources outside of the system' (Foster 1972:59). Treasure, like winning the lottery, finding a powerful patron, marrying a rich outsider or getting a visa to the United States, does not deplete local social resources, which seem already overtaxed. It is a form of potency stored away from former times, perhaps under different logics (in Mexico hordes of gold from the pre-Columbian empires) and thus allowing an alternative explanation for sudden success within a 'closed' system.²⁶

Foster (1965:302) made connections to the Middle East, and particular Egyptian 'peasant studies', where he suggests notions of kinship-centred obedience and deference of young men into their thirties to their elders forms the right conditions for a similar cosmology to emerge. The shallowness of his engagement with what amounts to a set of Orientalist tropes (the sort discussed by Abu-Lughod 1989) has discouraged serious engagement with Foster's wider point in Middle Eastern contexts.²⁷ For Foster, the conception of limited good seems to be a psychosocial response to the scarcity of land in certain agricultural contexts.²⁸ Yet land scarcity is a very recent phenomena in much of Jordan, postdating treasure stories.

Foster's general argument has been unpicked on its own terms, through pointing out many accounts in peasant societies Foster thought his theory applicable to of good things increasing through effort (Kennedy 1966) and been made redundant as economic anthropology has moved away from the quest for general principles (Du Boulay and Williams 1987). Yet while the universalism of Foster's argument may be dispensed

²⁶ Although how closed even Foster saw these systems as having been is doubtful, given his later points about exterior goods and comparisons with the Middle East and China.

²⁷ Ideas of the limited good touched upon '*ayn al-hasud* – the 'eye of envy', a set of symbols, beliefs and practices then in-vogue as an explanatory tool in ethnology of the Middle East and wider Mediterranean (Tillion 1983) whereby covetous glances can cause harm to that which is coveted and to mitigate this, praising the coveted thing or person is avoided or rather directed solely to God (via the phrase *ma-sha 'allah* – 'what God wills').

²⁸ Kennedy (1966:1213) suggests that what Foster takes as a common principle is 'usually based on real histories of people depriving others of land'.

with, the connection in many different settings between certain modes of economic thinking and widespread interest in hidden treasure or other forms of sudden felicitous wealth remains intriguing. Moving beyond Foster’s reductive and determinist account, the idea of images of the limited good, and of the hunt for socially non-destructive sources of extraneous wealth does not have to be a facet of bounded ‘peasant societies’, but rather is surely one of a number of images of economic life available to most people in most settings, coming into keener focus at particular moments; after all many textbooks explain money and share-holding with the analogy of sharing a pie. Furthermore, in the move towards alternative and pluralist economics, ideas of steady-state economics and their historical precedents have come in for greater scholarly attention, leading to a re-examination of some of the ideas associated with the limited good (Trawick *et al* 2015).²⁹

I thus argue that ‘images of the good’ including images of being struck by external luck, which does not upset the current social distribution, can prove a useful way of engaging with experiential and affective dimensions of economic life. At the least, the idea of connecting certain beliefs and practices around luck and fortune, in particular finding buried treasure, with broader economic dispositions, including anxieties and dilemmas over the social effects of wealth and inequality, seems a useful line of analysis. I am not suggesting Jordanian rural Bedouin are operating in such a closed system or that most people view their social and economic environment thus. However, I am suggesting that images of the good as limited often do crop up, here and elsewhere, from time to time and with various degrees of force, often as a result of particular historical dynamics. The current crisis of land and land ownership in this part of rural Jordan, connected to wider anxieties about social reproduction and what will become of younger generations, presents a dynamic where images of this sort come to the fore for some people. Foster’s image of the limited good, shorn of its cognitive baggage and universal, structural explanatory power, becomes a useful analytic for linking waithood, consumption and interests in buried treasure, while in no way implying that these things are everywhere and always found together.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I describe a very different set of images of the good; those to do with transformative political protest. These, I argue, sometimes

²⁹ Of course the idea of the risk-averse subsistence peasant has long outlived Foster’s image. In the form of Scott’s (1977) *Moral Economy of the Peasant* a similar set of assumptions is still taught and thought about in contemporary anthropology, as discussed in Chapter 3.

partake in another kind of belief in hidden treasure – the belief that if the whales were beached, and the court thrown down (or at least diminished in power) Jordan's economic crisis would come to an end, and money would flow freely to infrastructure and subsidised goods. Once, while talking to Osama from the Dhiban Hirak about the refugee situation, I said that I regretted how my country and other developed nations demanded through the IMF that Jordan balance its books at a time when Jordan is stretched to the limit trying to provide services to refugees. I argued it was in the interests of the European nations to keep these refugees in Jordan, rather than spreading into the 'migrant crisis' in Europe, and yet Jordan receives little help with this burden. 'This is what the Government want you to think. The refugees are not a big problem. The king is paid by the UN and others to feed them, and still the money goes into the court. Really, I'm telling you, they make money, they don't cost money.... they cover where all the wealth goes, they hide it being eaten'.³⁰ This is far from the primary discourse on refugees, but it does present an interesting case of – and perhaps counter to – the zero-sum game of limited good; a suggestion that someone else's loss (of their home) might be the host's gain, but also that taking in newcomers may in fact be a source of wealth for some and impoverishment for others.

In my first campaign day-trip with Dr Ahmed Oweidi al-'Abbadi I asked him on the way home to explain *Harakat al-Urdunia's* economic policy. 'We don't need one' he said in English, 'the political and the economic problems are the same here. If we address the political problem – the corruption and the waste – the economy will be fine'. I asked him about the latest figures from the IMF. 'They are lies. Jordan is fine, it is rich, you saw the shops in 'Abdalli mall? The queen goes there, and then she does a fashion shoot for Vogue. They take everything. They leave crumbs for the Nation. There is no poverty, just corruption'. Whenever the queen indulged in a fashion shoot, the various opposition WhatsApp distribution lists would post the price-tags. While some, like Hind al-Fayiz, resist this focus exclusively on the queen, the wider point remains. The *fāsidīyn* (the 'corrupt') and their foreign patrons, whose wealth, it is felt, cannot all be licit or made through normative means, are in a sense like the gold found in the ruins; an unaccountable and exterior source of wealth, that can be plundered by their former victims without the social consequence of ruining fellow moral subjects that one might not wish to harm, but instead actively redresses a social ill. In this sense,

³⁰ In the context of Occupied Palestine, Schnell (2008) specifically makes the link between refugees as a moral resource in the struggle to gain international aid and investment, and ideas of hidden treasure.

draining the swamp and finding within it the ill-gotten treasures of a cast-down elite becomes a most appealing image of the (limited) good.

5.8 Conclusion

I have attempted an analysis of the intersection of demographic and economic change with certain subjectivities around wealth, consumption and the ‘good’, which lead to a set of dilemmas for young people about how to live, and what model of accumulation and consumption they should follow. The stewardship and conservation of land and resources through genealogically defined lines of transmission in order to reproduce the social into the next generation (an ever more doubtful prospect, as even minimal social reproduction demands the consumption of ever greater capital) is opposed to the (perceived) destructive consumption of wealth that seems to be overtaking those parts of rural Jordan touching Amman. My interlocutors, I argue, talk about such dilemmas, and draw attention to their experiential sharpness, through using consumption metaphors; a way of thinking and talking about economic life probably always present to some degree, but which comes to the fore in certain contexts.

In this setting, dilemmas and contrasts emerge between social continuity and the intergenerational breakdown that may, it is feared, follow from individual success and freedom of choice. These dilemmas inform new moral economies of suffering and effortful aspiration and growth, variously accepted or contested by those in the increasingly open-ended generation between school and marriage. Pious forbearance, dejected apathy, enforced passivity and restless action might all serve as general descriptive terms, despite their inherent tensions. I have avoided focusing on these prescriptive moral frameworks, although ethnographically they were undoubtedly important in thinking about my interlocutors’ experiences, falling back instead on the rather nebulous anthropological heuristic of ‘waithood’. While I find Foster’s universalist aspirations reductive and over focused on passivity, I find the idea of images of the (limited) good suggestive of certain experiences of these wider forces. It provides an insight into the deep grammar of protest movements, desires to punish and reform the corrupt, efforts to create and dissolve the social, and in some specific circumstances, to hunt for hidden wealth.

The linking thread through this chapter has been the verb to ‘eat,’ suggestive of a consumable, if not always a limited good. While abandoning the idea of an integrating

cognitive principle, it remains that moral economies represented through consumption must, to some degree, be imagined as limited: one cannot have one's cake and eat it. Similarly talk of the young, the weak, and Bedouin more generally being eaten or bled dry by the state represents resistance to the language of growth, where a rising tide raises all ships, and where the various parts of the nation benefit together. Instead the image of the nation implied is one of (claimed) semi-sovereign parts, where growth for one is loss for another. The economic reforms of structural adjustment are not here interpreted as preconditions for general growth, nor as a general imperialist penetration to be resisted, but as transfer and rebalance of wealth and power between named and placed parts of the nation, for instance away from the East-Bankers and the rural, and towards the court, the city and the corrupt. When the Hirak protesters shouted 'who rules us? The damned IMF!' and 'the people of Jordan know who are among the corrupt!' (as I describe in the final chapter) they did so in light of this ambivalent and anguished relationship to the economic vision of progress apparently forced upon Jordan from afar. The dilemmas of young people without an obvious role to play or economic niche to fill present a 'case' of waithood, but one where far older and more structural logics also emerge, as they presumably must in all settings.

6 DEMONSTRATING POWER AND PROTESTING THE POLITICAL: MODALITIES OF PROTEST AND COLLECTIVE ACTION IN CENTRAL JORDAN

This final chapter considers various encounters with, and accounts of, protests, demonstrations and large-scale, public-facing collective action. These form an important ethnographic setting as well as a discursive resource in the accounts of my interlocutors, to illustrate explanations of political life and the nature of *'ashā'ir* with reference to the potential of collective action and demonstration. Protest movements, if not protests themselves, would once have seemed an improbable research topic for work in Jordan, a notably stable country in a volatile region. Although large-scale violence, rebellion or disorder have not been as evident in Jordan in recent years as in neighbouring states, protests are a ubiquitous part of Jordanian political life. I have already indicated how dilemmas over social reproduction in rural and peri-urban villages, which are cast as tribal and Bedouin, intersect with the wider economic crisis and the long-term structural issues around land ownership. I have also described how historical imaginaries around sovereign spaces, interpersonal relationships between elite families claiming to represent broader categories and state power all overlap. Here I bring all these themes together, showing how they each play out in various types of protest movement and collective action.

Throughout the period of fieldwork, but especially during May and June 2018, numerous protests took place across Jordan, including in Madaba and the surrounding small towns. These protests marked the largest national uprising since the protests of 2011-2012, and have continued, to varying degrees, ever since. During these intense

months of fieldwork I constantly scanned social media to check how different groups and people were reporting matters, and had many uncomfortable and unsettling conversations with reluctant interlocutors, in order to keep on top of the bewildering array of developments, claims and counter claims that emerged in this period.

At the conceptual and often the actual centre of these protests were various largely unstructured, independent rural protest groups, broadly affiliated with labour movements and calling for economic reform and greater political participation; generally termed *Hirak ash-shāby* ('the popular movement'). I focus on the Hirak (protest movement) of the town of Dhiban, often considered the original and one of the most radical and effective of the regional movements. These rural protest movements, and particularly Dhiban Hirak, came to such national prominence in 2011 that the entire anti-government protest wave came to be called informally Hirak, a term that has also come to prominence in Iraq, Algeria and other Arab nations. In these events different types of people collected together to demonstrate for a variety of aims. These ranged from clear and instrumental, such as demanding the release of a prisoner or lower fuel prices, through open-ended demands for change, recognition and respect, to events where the main purpose seemed simply the demonstration of solidarity, and the ability to mobilise people *en masse*, in order to form a shared reputation. The focus in this chapter is twofold; firstly the experiential and discursive conditions of possibility that frame these demonstrative events; secondly, the contests over leadership, sovereignty and modes of political representation that such events frame.

Many of these events had much in common with a different type of demonstrative, collective act that has been the subject of discussion and media attention in Jordan; so-called '*ishtabākāt* *'ashā'irīyah* 'tribal clashes'. This type of event is called thus in official statements and media reports, but my interlocutors frequently instead used the term *hoshah*; meaning a skirmish or scuffle. These too are commonly seen by those who take part in them as demonstrations of the power of names to mobilise people to respond to insults or threats. As Hughes (2018) points out, media condemnation of these tends to cast them as not only violent and disruptive, but as parochial and counter-modern. On some rare occasions, as in Ma'an in the early 2000s and again in 2016, they can involve sustained periods of lethal violence, destruction and the rejection, and indeed combatting of any efforts by state forces to restore order (Hamarnah 2003). These events are seen by both participants and the Jordanian media as driven by matters of collective honour shared between agnatic kin-networks, which, it is imagined at a

larger discursive level combine to form larger name/space categories of '*ashīrah*. It is in these settings, as much as in electoral politics or in legal cases, that claims to solidarity made through the language of shared honour are actualised, or fail to be actualised.

At first glance, these two types of demonstration seem to share little beyond the material fact of collecting together to act and demonstrate collective will. Even this gathering of bodies together, as discussed below, is materialised with slightly differing aesthetics. However, attempts by state actors and journalists to keep them separate inevitably run into difficulty. This chapter considers the ways in which they tend to get entangled with each other, so that what may start as a scuffle on a university campus between young men from rival '*ashā'ir* over putative insults may become a matter of national politics, while protesters demanding a political action from the state may be delegitimised by opponents as 'tribal' or motivated by factional interest. This is not intended as a full political account of the protests, nor an experiential one, but rather a consideration of their place within a broader imaginary of collective political representations. By considering the conditions of possibility for these types of collective action, the wider question explored throughout the earlier chapters of this thesis comes back into focus, of how certain kinds of socio-political category come to be reproduced and deployed.

6.1 Hirak and *Hoshah*: modalities of demonstration

There are many forms that defy easy categorisation as either Hirak or *hoshah*, as we shall see, having elements of both, and categorisation is often a matter of political rhetoric. Largely political protest can be dismissed as merely tribal, or legitimised through tribal idioms of honour, and likewise activists may seek to make use of seemingly tribal matters to pursue political aims. *Hoshah* or 'tribal clashes' most readily summon up ideas of spontaneous aggregations bent on answering collective insults, yet I use it here in a broader sense, to include a more general type of collective action or demonstration conducted on a distinctly 'tribal' basis. While the idea of 'movement' is crucial to the meaning of Hirak (literally and conceptually), a *hoshah* can have extremely narrow or even no instrumental goals. Used in this sense, I suggest there is some utility in differentiating these two broad forms, which could crudely be seen as the political protest movement and tribal collective action. Tribes such as the Bani Sakhr '*ashā'ir* also take part in politically-motivated protests which, as we saw in Chapter 3 in the case of land, often focus on similar issues to other protest movements, including

Hirak. Yet these causes are specific not general, and instrumental, not revolutionary. They can rarely be seen as anything like a movement, rather their collective action is taken to maintain and benefit the collectivity itself. I will discuss several cases where different attempts to entangle and disentangle these forms present real ambiguity, but for now an example of both how similar these forms can be, and yet also how they generally do differ, is useful.

A long-standing dispute over 56,000 dunums of arid land on the edge of the desert around the villages of al-Qatana and al-Janab has dragged on for decades due to the ambiguities of registration and contested settlement described in Chapter 3: in the 1940s and 1950s the king, according to the Jabur Bani Sakhr, publicly confirmed this area to be owned communally by the Jabur *'ashīrah*, a point his grandson Hussein also maintained during a royal visit in the 1970s, and by Abdullah II in front of the council of ministers in 2010. Yet despite these royal utterances, at some point in the 1950s some of this land was sold to wealthy investor Sattam al-Awad and his sons, although the exact area included is disputed. These sons still claim to be owners, and have built heavily on the land. During my fieldwork, local shaykhs and men of influence from the Jabur Bani Sakhr cooperated with Sukhur Facebook groups to post a statement asking for the king to honour the oaths of his house, calling for a three day and night *al-wagfa al-ihitijājīah* – a ‘protesting vigil’, to take place outside a petrol station near al-Qatana, and threatening a mass protest if their demands were not heard, or if their activists or the lawyers handling their case were harassed by the security services. These vigils, small but attended by representatives of most important local families, gained wide traction on social media.

The use of a statement, issued via Facebook, and its call for fairness in the domain of land, based on notions of a more equitable past moral economy, is in many ways related to the demands of Dhiban Hirak, the nationalist tribal party of Dr Ahmed, and the rhetoric of opposition politician Hind al-Fayiz. It makes mention of the guests of the Sukhur. However, the statement itself begins firstly by praising the Hashemite royal house, and declaring the loyalty of the Jabur Bani Sakhr to it, as friends to the king and as fellow sons of the *watan* (homeland). The statement has a paragraph listing the martyrs of the Jabur; soldiers who died fighting for Jordan in its wars. The claim to the land and the call for the royal house to honour its oath is thus grounded in other claims to loyalty. This loyalty is not quite that of the subordinate, but of the loyal ally, an ally whose suzerainty one may recognise without giving up a claim to being morally

equal and potentially sovereign. It is the right of a loyal ally to protest, to bring attention to grievances, in a controlled, measured way, under the firm guidance of leading tribal authorities who have close links at every level with the court and the Government. Such uses of collective action, gathering to respond to a slight or insult to the integrity of the tribal name, are a very old form of politics, yet Facebook here adds a new dimension. The statement-posters and organisers were not shaykhs, but social media influencers with their own names and support, and crucially, they and the shaykhs began to diverge, as the former called for calm, and the latter groups continued to push for further protests.

Hirak protesters, as we shall see, deploy much the same set of tactics and discourses in their calls to collective action. They similarly often stress how much the populations of the places they come from have given to the homeland, and the language of martyrdom is equally ubiquitous. Yet the relationship to the state is represented more often than not through a more recognisable discourse of resistance. The corruption, abuse of power and downright oppressiveness of authority figures is highlighted, and focus is put on acts of coercion and violence by the state. In the Jabur protest discourse, and in other similar statements from public demonstrations from among the Sukhur, the ability of the state to coerce and to impose itself upon them is implicitly denied or de-emphasised. In this example, the statement stated that they would escalate if any attempt at policing or harassment was made. The assumption behind taking this sort of action is that protest will be part of a process of negotiation, begun through public collective action but continued once the point is made through interpersonal, perhaps amicable, meetings between representatives of the Jabur and the Government. Hirak protest too often claim their objective is to bring matters of injustice to the attention of the powerful, but in practice their rhetoric, as we shall see, calls for a very different type of outcome from the Jabur protests.

Such a distinction was not apparent to me when I first started to take an interest in protests. One cold winter night in Madaba, while walking down the road with a friend, Marwan, towards a sweetshop we wanted to visit for *kunafah* (a popular sweet snack) we saw bonfires in the road, and circles of men gathered round them. It looked rather welcoming, like a bonfire-night gathering, and I could hear the low sound of voices in conversation. ‘What’s this?’ I asked. ‘It is a *mudhaharah*’ Marwan explained,

a demonstration.¹ It certainly didn't conform to my image of one. It was, Marwan explained, more a civil disobedience. Truck-workers were protesting against the monopoly owned by Zaīyad Manasīr, a wealthy businessman close to the royal family, for the transit of phosphate from the mines in the south to Amman.² They had blocked the highway with their trucks and were now crouching or standing around their fires, seemingly in good if mellow spirits. 'No one can disagree with them, not even the police. No one benefits from corruption, it makes us all sick' Marwan said, explaining the sociable atmosphere.³ This was one of the first encounters I had with a growing wave of anti-corruption, economy-centred protests. Two months before, many protested in the capital outside the US Embassy following Trump's decision to move the Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. These protests were widely and sympathetically reported, including by pro-government media. In contrast, the wave of protest described below received little media attention, was treated largely as a simple economic response to fuel rises in the international press, and remained disparate and divisive. It is also deeply revealing of historical relations and shifting political subjectivities in and beyond my field site.

Weeks later I visited another Sukhur friend, Omar Hagaish, at the small private Israh University; mostly the preserve of middling ability and middle-class rural East-Banker students. On entering the cafeteria he and his friends showed me with amusement some broken furniture. 'This is from the *hoshah*' [the scuffle] they told me. I was shown several grainy videos of students shouting and throwing insults at each other across a hallway, before a man ran out across the space and laid into those on the other side with a chair, beginning a confused *melée*. The man who had sparked the fighting was, I found out, a political science student called Mahmud al-Hasan, from the Jama'aīn branch of the Bani Hamida. 'Listen' Omar told me 'you can hear when he hits he shouts *siyyah!*'. This cry is a *nakhwah*, a poetic attribute and potential war-cry

¹ The choice of word is significant. The common Arabic term for a protest, *ihitijāj*, is suggestive of placards and union strikes, and carries a slightly negative, disapproving tone. *Mudhaharah*, as I discussed later with Samer, my Arabic teacher, has a meaning suggestive of peaceful demonstration, and is more approving. This was far from a straightforward division between protest and demonstration. In some circles when I would call a protest I had seen *mudhaharah*, I would be corrected, and told it was *ihitijāj*, while sometimes others in the same audience would disagree.

² Zaīyad Manasīr is also a Russian citizen and a close associate of President Putin.

³ I only found out later that Manasīr mainly uses non-unionised drivers, and that the independent unionised drivers I had seen were mostly of East-Bank origins – a fact the significance of which will become apparent below.

associated with a specific name/space category – in this case of the Hamaydah.⁴ The same rallying cry, I was told, had been used by young Hamaydah when fighting with police during the protests in Dhiban, the small Bani Hamida-dominated town in the south of Madaba Governorate in 2016. The students he had attacked were from the Bani Sakhr, which include Omar's *'ashīrah* of Hagaish. The appropriate answer – the Sukhur *nakhwah* of *hamr nuāthar* – 'red eyes!' (signifying ferocity) could only be heard clearly later in the video, although it soon drowned out the other, as the Sukhur student numbers swelled. The fight resulted in no serious injuries or consequences. Its cause was a complex series of insults and rumours of sexual impropriety which had become entangled with broader structures of antagonism between various Hamaydah and Sukhur families, who to the south of Madaba are often involved in bitter land disputes. As explained below, recent political uprisings have further divided the two tribal categories (if not always neatly). It is a fault line for many personal and collective antagonisms. Such events are frequent on most Jordanian campuses, although Israh, being in the core Bani Sakhr area, is probably especially prone to them. Rarely, they can prove deadly; at the University of Petra in 2018 a student was shot dead. They are often discussed, recorded and celebrated on social media groups.

These specific events clearly do not emerge from primordial structures, but rely on affective labour to reproduce dispositions. New students often come knowing a few relatives or neighbours, who in turn introduce them to social media groups specific to students from a particular *'ashīrah*.⁵ Those who wish to become visible in such groups spend considerable time producing and posting memes celebrating the *'ashīrah*, and in particular expressing pride, fierceness and generosity. Both images making deliberate connections to an imagined history of desert nomadism and fierceness (horses, camels, swords, daggers, *nakhwāt*, quotes from epic poetry etc) and images of contemporary prowess and masculinity (4x4 vehicles, guns, balaclavas) are used, sometimes being combined in original ways (see Figure 6.1). Photos posted to such groups tend to be expressive of certain ideals of masculinity – men in traditional dress or combat fatigues, driving powerful cars, riding horses or camels, shooting guns, and cooking over open

⁴ The term *nakhwah* can have various meanings as well as a war cry. More broadly it refers to an idea of a code of valorised behaviour, akin to certain ideas of 'chivalry' in the European imagination, as well as being a synonym in some senses for *'assabiyah* – the 'group-spirit' made famous by Ibn Khaldun (Lancaster and Lancaster 1986). The meaning of war cry has the specific sense of a phrase uttered by someone about to do a brave and often selfless feat for a co-member of a name/space group, such as coming to their rescue in battle.

⁵ Anecdotally this also occurs when joining military or other state organisations.

fires. Opportunities to take such images are keenly sought out.⁶ Marwan was (though graduated) a member and page administrator for the University of Jordan Bani Sakhr page, with over 1200 members. He said his policy was to never report on a *hoshah*, and to take down posts that encouraged them. His images were always either professional or what he termed ‘traditional’ (*taqlīdy*). For him, a careful project of content curation, bordering on self-censorship is needed to keep the group from being shut down or interfered with by University or security authorities.

Figure 6.1: Collection of Bani Sakhr Facebook memes, reproduced with permission from URL <https://www.facebook.com/groups/371011723387190/>



Such groups can also however take on a political role. I came to know a group of Hamaydah at the University of Jordan, both staff and students, linked less formally by a WhatsApp group. During the 2018 protests they produced their own banners, proclaiming ‘the Bani Hamida at the University of Jordan are with the activists and against the corrupt’ (Figure 6.2).

⁶ With access to a good quality camera, my wife and I were often called upon to produce such images – indeed when I once suggested I contribute some money towards the stable where Rayan, Hamid and I went riding, I was told I could compensate by taking good pictures (see figure 1.4). Meanwhile In their public profiles, these students represented themselves through very different imagery, in suits and graduation dress, in front of large modern buildings, or in grand offices.

Figure 6.2: Bani Hamida protesters raise a Bani Hamida banner outside the gates of the University of Jordan. The Hashtags say ‘Hamaydah youth’ and ‘Jordanian Hamaydah’. Photo reproduced from Facebook post with permission.



By these statements these groups linked themselves with the rural Hirak movements, and indeed often the same young Hamaydah men were involved in Dhiban Hirak as well. These groups are still used to develop *wāstah* connections, disseminate local and national news stories, and to share pious or valourised sentiments of various sorts. More than their overt political content, it is their role in *hoshah* which makes them problematic to many Jordanians, and puts their administrators under considerable pressure to self-censor. Since January 2019, new laws have made such pages, and particularly anything that promotes rebellion or unrest, extremely sensitive. The proposed laws include a new definition of criminalised ‘hate speech’ that includes posts valorising ‘tribal clashes’ as well as protest organisers (Samaro and Sayadi 2019:n.p.):

every writing and every speech or action intended to provoke sectarian or racial sedition, advocate violence or foster conflict between followers of different religions and various components of the nation.

The vision of a nation of ‘components’ euphemistically touches upon the idea of *hoshah*. The passing of this law against considerable opposition by parliament in December 2018 during a period of protests was taken as an assault by Osama and his

friends, but others, including Marwan were somewhat in favour, suggesting security involvement with social media was inevitable, and at least now people would know where they stood.

The term *hoshah* can also refer to more serious forms of violence, often with longer histories. The organised pursuit of *thār*, ‘revenge’, follows transgressions and slights to honour so great they have *aswadat al-wajah* – ‘blackened the face’, a condition of humiliation and shame that can only be answered in some cases through violence. In some serious cases, or where restitution is refused, only *dam* – ‘blood’ – has the ability to wash and to ‘whiten’ the face. This sort of violence, as seen in Chapter 2, is bound by a norms and expectations, falling within theoretically precise if often contested genealogical limits and involving widely acknowledged procedures, and administered by shaykhs and other influential older men. These figures rely on acquiring and maintaining a reputation as skilled resolvers of violent disputes. This reputation is essential both for acquiring patrons who come to them to have problems solved, but also for making a claim of representative sovereignty to the state. Keeping violence and disruption within these limits is one of the main justifications given for state endorsement of putatively-tribal dispute resolution procedures, resulting in reduced or even suspended legal punishments for the parties involved. Omar Hagaish called those who operate within the Palace Convention ‘government shaykhs’.

Social media driven *hoshah* tends to lack genealogical exactness and clear leadership, instead forming group collectivities through fluid, affective claims to broad shared feeling. As Hughes (2018) discusses, Facebook groups are often implicated by both concerned shaykhs and journalists in encouraging wider and less controlled violence, making revenge attacks more random. Of particular concern is the potential for such mobilisations to ignore formal truces, a concern that I observed first-hand through my friendship with the Abu Slayah family in *jalwa* (protective exile during an unresolved feud) in Madaba, that had resulted in the family avoiding social media, so that their vengeful relatives would not find them. More broadly, where a truce is not producing the desired results, these sorts of informal networks of information and mobilisation can be used to get people out on the street in threatening, often armed, groups, to put pressure on the decision-makers. It is this sort of counter-legal and threatening type of collective action that those opposed to the tribal in Jordan find most disturbing.

Yet the settings which seem most ‘tribal’, in terms of producing this sort of resistance to coercive state power, are also at the forefront of political protest. Hirak as a term for a type of movement came to prominence in Jordan in the 2000s to refer to more than 40 small protest groups, mostly in rural areas dominated by East-Banker ‘*ashā’ir* – a constituency long thought to be ‘unflagging supporters’ of the monarchy, instead delivering ‘raucous and uncontrolled opposition from the heart of tribal countryside historically allied with the crown’ (Yom 2014:229-230). This challenged long-held assumptions that the main threat came from Palestinians and the urban poor in East Amman; and even in East Amman, the Hirak protests came out of the poor East-Banker suburb of Hay al-Tafileh. For Yom (*ibid.*:234) the crucial point is that while East-Banker constituencies have previously conducted protests over matters of honour or for economic restitutions (often to their specific name/space category) the post-2011 Hirak was based around youth activists, calling for national political changes; a constitution, an elected executive, free speech and secular law. I found these activists were often keen to portray themselves as self-consciously leftist, secularist, Pan-Arab and revolutionary, tied formally or informally to broader networks of labour unions and activists, and offering a type of solidarity that was ecumenical and went far beyond ‘*ashīrah* level or even East/West-Banker divisions, although contrary to Yom’s focus, I found political liberalisation was often subordinated in hierarchies of aims to issues of economic sovereignty and redistribution. One of the most vocal, most successful and arguably original rural Hirak is that of Dhiban, dominated almost exclusively by a single large name/space category, the Bani Hamida. Indeed within it, many leading figures and spokespeople come from shaykhly families. The Sukhur meanwhile, while some individuals have been sympathetic to broader opposition politics, are largely uninvolved as a social category in this development.

6.2 The Dhiban Hirak

The groups, calling themselves *Hirak ash-sh’aby* (popular movements) sprung up amongst unemployed Bedouin youth in and around small towns. The most prominent rural Hirak movements were in central and southern Jordan, most notably in Dhiban, Karak and at-Tafilah, as well as in suburbs of the capital where people from these towns have moved. Initially there was apparently little shared purpose except anger at unemployment, rising living costs and ‘corruption’. As discussed in Chapter 2, corruption here came to mean not just individual depoliticised malpractice (although

examples of this abounded), but at structural redistributive issues, that often touched upon matters of economic sovereignty, whereby the wealth of the nation had been misappropriated from the *sh'ab* (the people), and given over to foreign imperialists and their cronies. Many Bedouin across southern and central Jordan worked in the former state industries of potash and cement, and when privatised and opened to foreign investment, many lost their jobs (Harrigan *et al* 2006, Yom 2014). In Dhiban, the state cement factory was privatised, with employment decreasing from over a thousand to just 60. Meanwhile animal feed subsidy removals in 1996 made pastoralism unprofitable, military and government pensions were reduced, and promised service and infrastructure rollouts to Bedouin communities – long seen as part of a bargain with the state in return for settling – were endlessly delayed.

In the mid-2000s a series of important facilitating figures emerged to coordinate, join up and encourage a tentative network, asking for protests to coincide on certain days and to use similar slogans. As well as well-known Bedouin leaders, this network included the Christian journalist Nahid Hattar, assassinated outside the courthouse before his blasphemy trial for posting a cartoon of the Prophet in Amman in 2015, and union leaders, such as Muhammad As-Snayd, who I return to below. The Hiraq activists came to form close relationships with several East-Banker-dominated unions; notably the Veterans' Association, the Teachers' Union,⁷ the Dockworkers' Union in Aqaba and the Day-Waged Labourers' Movement (described below). Labour activists often spoke in small town squares to the youth movements about nationalisation, subsidies, and job-creation. As we have seen, the nature of employment in Bedouin areas, and the unevenly felt consequences of economic liberalisation, mean that far from being opposed social modes, labour movements and Bedouin protestors overlapped considerably in aims and composition. This network of informally-led, generally secular and leftist rural movements came to so define the 2011 protests that even when the attention of the media moved to mass protests in Amman, dominated by urban city-dwellers and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood (Amis 2013), the entire period of national unrest came to be termed Hiraq.⁸ My focus in this chapter is on the Dhiban

⁷ The Teachers' Union was long considered an especially radical and leftist Union – briefly re-founded and then crushed in the late 2000s after being banned since the 1960s.

⁸ The term, meaning simply a 'movement' is of course a general one, and has been taken up in other Arab contexts such as Iraq and Morocco. However the concept of Hiraq-as-event remains deeply associated with the rural-based *Hiraq ash-sh'aby* groups. Protests in the capital after the Friday noon prayers, always a feature of life in many cities in the region, had intensified in 2010, but did not have a name, identity or momentum of their own in comparison to Hiraq.

Hirak, but given its centrality to national protests, this at times offers a wider perspective. As Osama and his friends proudly told me; ‘across the country, the *Darak* [Gendarmerie] know fear whenever the buses from Dhiban come’.

Many of the groups broadly forming Hirak still operate within a wider logic of name/space groups, either by implicitly or explicitly reproducing their structure (so that Hirak Dhiban is *for* the Bani Hamida) or through following their forms of consubstantiality, mutual care and gathering in new settings, as with the unemployment tent and other ‘sit-ins’, which I describe below. Anthropologists have drawn connections between labour unions and kinship groups, seeing within unions a process of ‘kinning’ resting upon commensality, mutual care, and family-like practices of favouring insiders for work opportunities, including Sian Lazar’s (2017) exploration of the intersection of kinship and politics in the Peronist unions of Buenos Aires, where being of the union is to be in a state of mutual being. In Jordan, where *wāstah* and questions of name and reputation are almost inevitably tied up with any sort of public life, the connection to kinship is ubiquitous but less explicit, and instead larger scales of relation than the consubstantial family tend to be the key metaphor. As mentioned, ‘family associations’ (of thousands) have been encouraged as an alternative to unions and social welfare (Baylouny 2006) but even within the few explicit labour unions, who almost by definition are protest organisations in Jordan, ideas of name/space are never far away. Unions and labour movements, like the state, are not only replacements, alternatives or rivals for tribal modes of association, but also structures that can work with and through tribes.

I was first introduced to the Dhiban Hirak ethnographically via Jordanian academic Sara Ababneh, who introduced me to a number of student activists, including Osama, who arranged to meet me in a café in Madaba known to be ‘Hamaydah’. Here he and his friends quizzed me on who I was, what my political agenda might be, where I stood on the Iraq War and Israeli Occupation, and if I was a spy. After this interrogation they invited me back a few days later. The atmosphere this time was friendly, encouraging and welcoming – it seems likely that as well as being encouraged by my answers to their interrogation, they had made inquiries about me in Madaba and had not found anything too disquieting. He next invited me to meet this family, and be quizzed by his father, who introduced himself as a leading member of the local Ba’ath Party, (which is legal but persecuted and marginalised in Jordan). Finally, interested in my

research and willing to work with me, he arranged a meeting of introduction with the main Hirak Dhiban activists.⁹

The two (at that time) leading public figures of the movement attended. They were quite familiar with this sort of encounter – I was not the first foreign scholar or journalist to interview them. They were ‘Ali al-Brizāt, a tall grey-haired lawyer in his fifties, scion of one of the two pre-eminent shaykhly lineages of the Hamaydah, and Sabri Mash’allah, a 29-year old psychology graduate from the University of Jordan. Both men had spent much of the last 18 months under security custody. ‘Ali dominated proceedings, and focused on anti-imperialism, democracy and legal and political freedoms. The meeting was in his *dīwān*, at the side of his village house, giving him the role of host. Drinking ‘Ali’s coffee everyone nodded and murmured agreement when he declared ‘the most important thing for us is freedom’. Sabri, and many of the younger men were quiet and attentive. Only after the meeting did Sabri say ‘you must also know, the most important thing for us all is employment and livelihoods’. Osama on the drive home said ‘next time you must speak just to Sabri, he was made shy by ‘Ali today’. So I did, and from then on I mostly spent time with Osama and his young friends who though from Dhiban spent most of their time in Madaba or Amman, and who looked up to and met more often with Sabri. Sabri himself was always absolutely unwilling to admit to any contradiction; ‘Abu Hassan [‘Ali] and I are in agreement in all things. We are like this’ he said, clasping his hands tightly. Sabri and ‘Ali later cooperated on a series of online videos and Facebook groups trying to unite different rural Hirak movements. They both regularly attended general protests in the capital, and in the autumn of 2019 took part in a national campaign of civil disobedience.

Before conducting direct ethnography on the Dhiban Hirak, I had many conversations where people asked me ‘have you heard about what happened in Dhiban?’ What had happened most recently during a decade-long period of unrest was the unemployment tent. This involved the unemployed gathering in a large tent erected in the town square of Dhiban (see figure 6.3), making visible a problem often hidden from public view by kin-networks which hide the shame of unemployed members and which provide some support for those out of work. For two months in the summer of 2016 more than seventy young unemployed men gathered daily. At points a smaller number of women also joined although they were eventually excluded, supposedly

⁹ Osama told me he liked anthropologists – as a social science graduate himself he was keen on the idea of activist scholarship.

because of the fear of a state crackdown. Participants sat, sang and drank tea and coffee. It was, as Sabri put it ‘like a party’. Indeed it mirrored many of the features of traditional wedding or *munāsibāt* (‘occasion’), and reproduced something of the enactment of political hospitality and alternative public provided by the *dīwān* of important figures that I described in Chapter 4. The Hirak cooperated with Muhammad as-Snayd’s labour movement to support the tent. The protest seemed both effective and peaceful, and to be achieving widespread support.¹⁰ One day during Ramadan, as Sabri and others told me with anger so intense they were sometimes near tears, just as those assembled were preparing to break their fast together, the *Darak* (Gendarmerie) descended on the tent, which they pulled down and burned, beating up those inside, and arresting 30 men. Generalised fighting broke out in the town, tear gas was fired, and several *Darak* were injured. It was at this moment, Sabri said, that many gave up on asking for economic reform – ‘the young turned against the system’. The Government called the Dhibanis ‘outlaws’ in official statements afterwards, and suggested that Dhiban needed to patiently wait for employment and investment to come. This, it turned out, consisted of funding for income-generation training schemes, to help men in the town start businesses; following a predictable neoliberal logic (see Sukarieh (2016) for an example of this process in Amman). As Sabri said with fury ‘what business is there here? People can buy bread only’.

Figure 6.3: The Unemployment Tent in Dhiban. The text reads ‘the tent of those without work. The sons of the corrupt and [versus/in contrast to] the sons of the people at the circle [the roundabout in the town square where the tent was located]’. Photo by Muhammad as-Snayd.



¹⁰ Apparently government officials and police visited peacefully.

Muhammad as-Snayd was among those arrested in the aftermath. Trained as an agricultural engineer but underemployed as a local employee of the Ministry of Agriculture, he had formed and led the Day-Waged Labourers' Movement (in Arabic *Hirak 'Ummal al-Muyawama*) since 2006 (on which see Philips 2019). This movement was unusual in the general strikes of 2011 and 2012 in recruiting a large number of female members, more likely than men to be given daily rather than long-term contracts, if they can find any work at all (Ababneh 2018). He led this mixed-gendered group of activists in several overnight sit-ins in the capital, shocking some norms but receiving widespread attention. Muhammad, who describes himself as left-wing and feminist, has become the most popular Bani Hamida Dhiban activist for media, and especially foreign media, to approach (Buck 2011, Al Jazeera 2019). He has been at the centre of numerous accounts of Hirak, including Ababneh's work (2016). However, my younger interlocutors no longer saw him as central. Osama was happy to set up a meeting for me with Muhammad, who he respected greatly but he told me 'before, he *was* Hirak. Now he is on the edges, *y'ani* he does his thing, and we do ours'. Sabri told me that since his arrest and then release, he had been given government work again, and so had been forced to take a less revolutionary line. He was now often called *dustury* – a 'constitutionalist' – in that he favoured reform towards constitutional monarchy.

I came to visit Muhammad for an interview in July 2018. By then he was working as the manager of a state land agricultural initiative at Wadi Wala', a river valley just outside Dhiban. He showed me around the farmland, explaining to me that in his opinion his agricultural work, making Dhiban self-sufficient and providing employment, was as important as his political and labour activism. 'Everything went wrong in Jordan because of Land' Muhammad told me, 'we can only have a future if we build it from the land'. After a tour and an hour-long account of Muhammad's prominent role in Hirak in the early days we went back to the guestroom of his small village house to eat a meal of homegrown produce, under posters of Saddam Hussein and Nahid Hattar, who he calls his martyrs. ('Nahid was my friend, and like Saddam... he fought for Arabs.') Whenever I visited Muhammad he talked as much about self-sufficiency – his eggs, his vegetables, his honey – as he did about politics, all with charm and charisma. He once pointed out to me the new water pipe that carries away the water from Wadi Wala to the city of Amman, making irrigation and agriculture harder around Dhiban. 'They are bleeding us' he said. He told me that he shows people

this pipe to demonstrate the problem between Dhiban and the Government – and their relative positions. It might seem he and his former union have thus slipped from Hirak. Instead his determination to build a new relationship to the land, with high-employment and self-sufficient agriculture, is an attempt at resistance to not only the colonial underpinnings of the state, but also to the self-consciously neoliberal vision of Jordan's rulers. It also hints at the centrality of issues of land, as discussed in Chapter 3, to continued unrest and a sense of unsettledness in Jordan.

As mentioned, Muhammad as-Snayd told me that many Hamaydah residents look at the Wadi Wala' pipe carrying their water to Amman as a 'bleeding' of the land and its potential. It is through such 'bleedings' and resistance to them, I contend, that the bled subjects have formed a sense of commonality, as I argued in Chapters 3 and 5. For 'Ali al-Brizāt, and many of the people in Jabal Bani Hamida, while a return to pastoralism is not always the most desirable opportunity for the young, it remains 'the foundation' (*al-assasa*) for meaningful social life, and without state support for it, life is hard to bear. Muhammad as-Snayd, as manager of the state land near Dhiban, similarly felt agricultural development was the only way forward for Dhiban.

6.3 'Hirak is for the Young and Poor!': the generational, socio-economic and gendered dynamics of leadership

When walking back on the summer evening when I had first met the Hirak leadership in 'Ali's house, Osama asked my thoughts on the two leading figures. I spoke candidly about the tension between Sabri's economic-centred vision, and 'Ali's preference for political freedom, and asked Osama how they fitted together. He said once again 'Sabri is better on his own, you should hear him sometimes, he can talk by God! ... he has been unemployed now for 6 years, though he has a good degree. *Wallah*, he has spent more time in prison than in a job'. When I next met Sabri he talked mostly of how it *felt* to be a top-performing graduate from a good family who could not work and was so poor he had given up smoking. Certain experiences of marginality, stuckedness and blocked social reproduction, as well as boredom, seemed to predominate. I asked how this fitted with older leaders from shaykhly lineages who sought to speak for the Bani Hamida and for rural Bedouin more generally. Sabri refused to be drawn, saying 'all Hamaydah support us'. A friend of Osama's who was with us spoke up 'it is not important what they [the old] think. Hirak is for *shabāb* [the young]'. Sabri tutted his head at this. 'It is for all the people' he said.

A few weeks before, when asking an elderly woman in the village of ad-Dīr her opinion on Dhiban Hirak she said almost the same thing, waving her hand in annoyance;

these troubles, stupid boys make them... no one wants ihtijāj [protests] but shabāb. Y'ani they are... poor but not the poorest. They have some education maybe; some learning and they make trouble.

There is a tension around whether Hirak is for the young, and perhaps for a particular type of young, or for everyone. These tensions, between generational grievances on the one hand and attempts to build broad support on the other, and between a strict focus on the economy and in particular unemployment, and a more general political project based around in some way liberalising or democratising the state, pervade Hirak, preventing any single strand coming to dominate. 'Ali once told me that the reason Hirak had come out of Dhiban was because 'the Hamaydah have a genius for politics' and have always been at the forefront of movements for change. They were, he told me proudly, the first 'Jordanian' (before Jordan existed) tribe to rebel against the Turks. In contrast, for Sabri the key to understanding Dhiban's unrest is its rate of graduate unemployment, which he said was the highest in Jordan; 'we do very well in schools and universities, but there are no jobs'. Outside Dhiban, and especially in the Jabal Bani Hamida area, unemployment is even higher but there has been little outright support for protests. As one young man told me in the village of Jadaydah 'the trouble is all in the towns. We are not like that here. There are many problems but praise God, we keep walking'. Some young people in Jabal Bani Hamida, Halima told me in her capacity as local councillor, do sympathise with Dhiban Hirak; a few have joined, and all recognise that it is 'a Hamaydah matter'. But the rural setting offers them little opportunity to collect into groups, and unlike the Sukhur villages around Madaba, which have regular buses into town, those without cars in the Jabal have few options even to get into Dhiban.

A further point of divergence has been the role of women. I have already mentioned in the last chapter how Muhammad as-Snayd's and Halima's prominent political championing of poor rural Bedouin women sat uneasily both with Ammani 'women's groups', and with some locals, although both had made considerable headway. Yet most people involved in Hirak are young men. Many rural women do not have Facebook accounts, rendering their support less visible. There are women openly associated with Hirak. In Amman, I talked (usually in English) several times with former parliamentarian, opposition-figure and businesswoman Hind al-Fayiz. For her,

mainstream Euro-American feminism is a problematic platform due to its associations. When standing for parliament, many advised her to wear a headscarf while campaigning, and then drop it later if she liked. She refused, saying that people should know how she will act in office. ‘The queen says only she can help women, that she is a feminist. She has enlightened us. No, really the position of women was much better in the 1960s here than it is today.’ Feminism, for many, was a foreign and possibly imperialist discourse, and the queen’s brand was furthering this association. She told me that her message is that women do not need the royal house and the queen to be their protectors against a patriarchal society, that the position of women has declined because of, not despite, liberalising economic reforms. Hind is the subject of a viral social media video when a male parliamentarian next to her, Yahya Suad, shouted ‘*ugudy ya Hind* [sit down, Hind]’. This circulated across the region, with the hashtag ‘Hind won’t sit down’ (al-Arabiya 2014). Suad was arguing against the Bedouin quota seats by which Hind was then elected to the house, calling them undemocratic. Hind refused to be silenced (though she herself has also been a vocal critic of the quota seats); Suad banged his desk shouting ‘God curse the quota seats!’

For Hind ‘women do not protest at the moment enough. We need to see more at the Thursday protests. But the important thing is to get change, to get reform.’ As seen women’s employment remains a contentious issue. While some like Muhammad as-Snayd have sought to raise the visibility of women in HIRAK, there is still in the rural movements a concern that championing women’s employment and economic participation will alienate others, who see families and their patriarchal heads as the most important economic constituents, and the correct beneficiaries of reform.

Osama’s mother, while he assured me sympathetic to his and his father’s secular leftist politics, was instead a committed member of the *Ikhwan Muslimīn* – the Muslim Brotherhood.¹¹ For Osama, the important point was that when national protests took place, the Brotherhood including his mother came out into the street in the capital. I asked if I could interview his mother about her politics and experiences of protest. I was politely but firmly told that I could not. Samira, Osama’s sister, was (as mentioned in Chapter 3), also pro-HIRAK. I asked Osama if he had ever tried taking her along to HIRAK protests. He said it would not work. I asked if the family forbade it, but he told me no,

¹¹ The Muslim Brotherhood’s most visible female spokesperson, Dima Tahboub (now an MP for the Islamic Action Front), herself champions women within the movement but has spoken against reforms to gendered Personal Status laws (Amis 2013).

she was allowed, 'she is free'. He had brought her along on a couple of marches, but told me 'she gets shy'. The radical nature of female participation of women in the overnight sit-ins of the Day-Waged Labourers' Movement, as Ababneh (2016) argues, becomes the more noteworthy given this context.

The question of leadership is also contentious. Many young activists would say 'Hirak has no leaders, it is for the young and poor'! When I asked what 'Ali and Sabri were, as well as more visible national opposition figures like Hind, they would usually call them *mumathilīyn* – meaning spokespeople or representatives. This term is suggestive of another type of representative, the shaykhs and dominant representative patrons. The ideal for those seeking influence is that they should be a channel through different social strata to their poorer supporters, reinforced through stories of shaykhs who bankrupt themselves entertaining their followers. Protests can have a role in this, as Martinez (2018) shows in his description of bakery-owners organising protests among their clients when suspended for misusing state-subsidised flour in popular sweets. But these protests are performative, strategic and instrumental rather than aimed at transforming society or the state. They are a demonstration of socio-political capital, but aimed at finding an accommodation mutually beneficial to government, protesting supporters and themselves. Such a redistributive moral imperative that underlies claims to political representation is, according to some, on the wane. The success of the rural Hiraks, Sabri and Osama told me, was in making national political demands around restored subsidies and wage-rises, rather than just asking for limited benefits for themselves and their localities and wider group, akin to the idea of labour solidarity in a Union. When Sabri and others were arrested their aim was always to use their imprisonment to draw attention to their cause. In other cases of arrest, for instance the case of pro-Hirak anti-government academic Faris al-Fayiz, a prominent academic from the Fayiz Sukhur lineage (discussed below), the point of demonstrations often seemed to be to reinforce and support quiet efforts through shaykhly channels to get members released.

Sabri and Osama were determined that the old politics of faction and representation, of giving Hamaydah special treatment, and in particular their shaykhs, was not going to work on them. The demonstrations in Dhiban, Muhammad as-Snayd said 'succeeded in spreading [the Hirak] to the north and the south, because we do not belong to anyone,' said Mohammed. This mode of politics is not rejected in every

context by Dhibanis. A young man in Mleih, just outside Dhiban told me, (in a manner I heard often, and reminiscent of Rayan al-Fayiz's statement in Chapter 2)

The Government keeps out of our affairs. If we have any problem, Abu Bisha' [a local shaykh] he will go and see a minister or a general. He will see him directly, no matter if others queue or need an appointment. He will be given coffee.

The same protesters who reject this sort of politics in one setting, in another, as when arrested, ask their older relatives to intercede via networks of this sort. Old adages though, that the police do not come to Bedouin villages, seem doubtful given the suppression of the unemployment tent. The inviolability, and thus sovereignty, of these places has limits; limits that have become increasingly clear.

In 2011, and again when Dhiban boycotted the 2013 elections, and again in 2016, the royal house quietly made prominent appointments from among restive 'ashā'ir. Muhammad said that they offered a Hamaydah the post of Minister of Agriculture. Others in the military received unexpected promotions. These men were then supposed to quietly pressure their associates to de-escalate. This did not happen. Those like Sabri who were detained for political reasons became a sticking point for Dhibanis. The use of appointees as quiet redistributive conduits was rejected. In this sense, it might be said that the shaykhly patrons and men of influence who sit near the pinnacle of *wāstah* were also the target of Hirak protest. 'They prefer businessmen in the palace now' Sabri said one day, while discussing Basim Awadallah, head of the Royal Court, a prominent banking executive and a man in the king's inner circle widely said to be corrupt. 'They are cheaper than us, because you can buy each man on his own'. Another interlocutor told me that the *muhtrimīyn* (respectable generally older men, usually in this context Bedouin) struggled in government because 'honour is expensive' (*sharafghalīy*) success requires redistribution and favours for a large client network.

Many in the king's inner circle are indeed people from beyond the world of well-known 'ashā'ir. In particular the queen and her circle are Palestinians who fled to Kuwait, later fleeing to Jordan after the Gulf War. When Sabri was arrested, he told me, the *Mukhabarāt* asked him 'why do you say these lies about Basim Awadallah'. 'What is this?' asked Sabri, 'does the Mukhabarat work for the country or for Basim Awadallah?'. The agents laughed but said he should be careful in future. Basim is seen as part of a new elite, who seek to dominate the economy and yet do not demand the

same degree of favouritism for their own broad support base and political participation that the old East-Banker families did. Military men and shaykhs are sometimes supportive of HIRAK, but it is important to note that protesters actively resist the implication that HIRAK is about serving their interests. To serve these sorts of relational and positional interests would risk turning *HIRAK* into *hosha*.

6.4 Situating Protest: revolutionary subjectivities and the ‘Arab Spring’

Before further exploring how *HIRAK* and *hosha* become entangled it is necessary to orientate these events in relation to broader narratives of protest and uprising. HIRAK supporters were self-consciously influenced by other protest movements in and beyond the region. By 2018 Osama, Sabri and their friends were openly drawing connections with and expressing a sense of solidarity with the (quite different and causally unrelated) HIRAK movements of Morocco, Algeria and Iraq. Others sought to downplay these revolutionary and international associations, but even shopkeepers in Dhiban said with pride that this is where Jordan’s ‘Arab Spring’ started. While factually debatable, the conceptual implications of such narratives need further examination.

Methodologically, anthropologists have recognised protests as an important setting for mimesis and making connections between localised or even individualised subjectivities and national and global scales of political economy.¹² Demonstrations of collective power or political will, whether treated as ‘tribal clashes’ or political activism, were topics many Jordanians and scholars working on Jordan assumed I *ought* to be interested in, not least because of their potential to upset and problematise some of the discourses and assumptions around Bedouin, East-Bankers and tribes. When explaining my interests to a Jordanian academic in Amman she said ‘ah, you’ve come to understand the Jordanian Arab Spring!’. A central question for many scholars working on Jordan since 2011 has been why the ‘Arab Spring’ failed to reach a critical mass leading to the sort of outright revolution seen in its neighbours (Oden 2011, Tobin 2012, Yitzhak 2018). The March 2011 mass protests and strikes remain the exemplary act of political protest for many Jordanians. The young HIRAKI activists in Dhiban had often only started protesting after 2011, but this was still always talked of as the pivotal event to return to, a moment of flux and potential to be recreated.

¹² Though these connections are often undertheorised.

I engage with the broader narrative of Jordan's 'Arab Spring' primarily to contextualise and de-generalise it. The last chapter considered the ways demographic change and intersubjectivities have been combined in certain accounts of the Arab Uprisings of 2010-2012. Here, I instead consider the role of the Arab Uprisings, and the particular globally recognised 'event-ness' of the 'Spring' label as a discursive resource and background, both for those experiencing protest in the region, and for continued anthropological engagements with them. The term 'Arab Spring', of course, is an invention of Euro-American journalism,¹³ and implies a particular historical comparison – facts of which many Jordanians are aware and make use. The implicit parallel with the 1858 'Spring of Nations' in Europe suggests a linear model of historical development; the Arab World following the well-worn path of Europe towards modernity-as-freedom, democracy and rights-based justice, but a century and a half behind. Massad (2011) and others have argued that mainstream discourses about the 'Arab spring', (a term which has entered Arabic as well – *ar-rabiya al-'arabiyy*) emphasising its suddenness and unexpectedness, serve to obscure long histories of protest, rebellion and dissent within the Middle East. It implicitly reinforces a common reading of Arabs as 'quietist' or 'quiescent', passively accepting dictatorship and tyranny, subjects of what an earlier scholarly tradition termed 'Oriental Despotism'. As Philip Proudfoot (2017:485) makes clear for Syria, this discourse of the Arab Spring carries ideological baggage, prioritising formal, civil and political rights over more material social and economic demands, which in fact according to Proudfoot predominated in Syria and elsewhere among protesters on the streets.¹⁴

Protest since 2011 has been a background to everyday life in the region. Street marches, angry chants, political posters and social media posts were part of the landscape and soundscape of my fieldwork. Protests and demonstrations are moments with the potential to crystallise otherwise abstract and uncertain relationships. For this reason, following Sian Lazar (2012, 2015), I maintain a focus simultaneously on the experiential (and therefore sensual) as well as the symbolic elements of collective action and protest. I do so without losing focus on how these are generative of and interact

¹³ The term was seemingly first coined by journalist Marc Lynch in a Foreign Policy journal article (Lynch 2011, cited by Yitzhak 2018) entitled 'Obama's Arab Spring' following which Obama himself took up the term in addresses. It entered Arabic when the Egyptian political activist and former UN official Mohamed al-Baradei began using the term (Yitzhak 2018:6).

¹⁴ Proudfoot (2017) has suggested protesters in practice avoid talking about political and constitutional questions in favour of the material and economic, because the question of political reform exposes fundamental differences between different potential visions of the body-politic.

with broader discourses and dispositions operating at a structural level of political economy.¹⁵ Lazar (2015) shows how in Argentina differing sounds, from rhythmic drums to more diffuse clattering of pots and pans, are used to not merely reflect but produce and contest different sentiments of spontaneity, collective-ness, and class consciousness. Lazar compares the slow rhythmic disciplined drumming of organised labour protests to the individualist clatter of the ‘pots and pans’ demonstrations, and the way such aesthetic and experiential differences contributed to discourses that the latter was a ‘middle class’ type of protest, reflecting wider discourses of individualism and neoliberalism. Drumming for labour unions, often from early childhood, is described by Lazar (2017) as one of the ways in which amity and mutual being among labour union members comes about and is instilled so that it seems to participants a matter of blood.

The use of ethnographic work on Latin America in a Middle Eastern setting takes place in a broader anthropological trend to reorient research on protest and resistance towards lived experience, anticipation and affect, rather than merely reproducing at ethnographic scale the analysis of political economy or political science, focusing on the politics of interest. In this way, proponents argue, broader analytical understandings of the nature of revolutions can be brought into dialogue and connected with ‘traditional’ anthropological questions and concerns around cosmology, representation and ritual, engaging with and taking seriously the way those caught up in such movements make sense of them. Recent anthropologies of protest and revolution, especially in the context of the Arab Spring, often focus on temporalities as a way of considering the intersection of the experiential with wider political structures, particularly focusing on the experiences of those living through these moments who are *not* marching on the street or taking place in revolutionary set-pieces like Tahrir Square (Winegar 2012, Hegland 2013, Holbraad and Pedersen 2013, Chertich *et al*, 2020). Holbraad and others have focused especially on the desire of revolutionary movements to create new worlds. Many protesters globally share an idiom of generating new better ways of being. This ‘cosmogonic’ reading, to borrow Holbraad’s (2018) suggested term, borrows from work on Chile, Peru and Cuba, but has gained renewed attention in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Cosmogonic accounts of revolution rest on an understanding of the normative values of the present that inform the world or way of being to be transformed within a

¹⁵ I particularly have in mind discourses of corruption and of bifurcation between East and West Bankers with their respective economic spheres.

particular setting. This connects with other recent trends towards a value-centred reading of protest and revolution (see Kurik 2016, Schielke 2015, and for discussion of this as a mode of describing resistance, Ortnor 2016). These analyses rests on a distinction between two types of value, normative and aspirational/transformational (or perhaps ‘revolutionary’). Schielke describes how normative values (for instance self-sufficiency, marriage, homeownership, stable employment etc.) are seen as thwarted, disrupted or drained of meaning in the present. These normative values are in conflict with other aspirational values (piety, commitment to grand causes, passionate love), which while offering in some senses a dialectical alternative to norms also seem thwarted in the present. Such values are made subject to revolutionary transformation. It seems then that the job of the ethnographer in both the cosmogonic and value-centred approaches to uprisings becomes giving an account of the kind of world their participants are hoping to bring about and the tensions and inconsistencies within such imaginaries – a world that as Schielke points out, is often experienced *during* protest movements, which are thus both the means and also a model of their own ends; a brief moment of ‘lived utopia’ in a world of unfulfilled grand schemes.

This type of analysis has obvious strength, particularly in allowing the sort of thick description that anthropologists best produce. However, in addition to some uneasiness at the political implications of such a mode of analysis, I find it ethnographically problematic in my setting, where my interlocutors de-emphasised the divisive business of imagining the future in favour of focusing on current frustrations in a simultaneously changeless and worsening present. Values are tricky and divisive; political economic reality is a much easier thing to find agreement on. Furthermore Hirak activists largely refused to use the language of breach and revolution, focusing on restitution to imagined former norms (a discourse already touched upon in my discussion of moral economy in Chapter 3) and doubted the efficacy of their actions to bring about their hopes. The demonstrative acts I describe certainly have their own commitments to temporal schemes and future imaginaries, but they are in no sense totalising ontologies nor connected neatly to projects of personal transformation, except in the general sense of being ‘committed’ (Schielke 2015).

The dark protests described by Joseph (2013) and Singerman (2007), driven by experiences of waithood, suggest a different dynamic. Their cosmogenesis, like those of the female suburban supporters of revolution in Cairo described by Jessica Winegar

(2012) remain unrealised.¹⁶ Cosmogonic and value-centred analyses, by remaining focused on the individual, are compelling for describing affect, but undertheorised in their description of effect. My account, influenced by these new turns but unable to fully adopt them in the face of the discontinuous, fragmented and partial aims and commitments of my protesting interlocutors, is unapologetically directed towards historical context and political economy in a sense wider than the experiential.

Following Victor Turner's (1988) notion of *communitas* – the strong feeling of togetherness emerging from the suspension of normal relationships and hierarchies during the liminal period of revolution-as-Van-Gennepian-rite-of-passage, this analysis focuses on the processes through which demonstrative acts come to reproduce and crystallise but also contest and remake the structures and hierarchies from which they emerge. I have therefore attended to how the types of events described in this chapter intersect with the various 'images of the good' discussed in the last chapter. In other words, how certain imaginings of the future (anticipatory, fearful or despairingly frustrated) come to be expressed through demonstrations of shared sentiment and togetherness, which also have the affective power to (trans)form such images.

6.5 'They Don't Care about Dhiban': counter-discourses, tribalising the political and politicising the tribal

In 2016, during the media storm that surrounded the Dhiban unemployment tent, Muhammad Funatil al-Hajaya, a famous Jordanian Bedouin poet (he self-describes as such) wrote and published a short piece in the Newspaper *al-Ittijāh*, which often featured him on its 'Desert Page' (*ṣafḥat al-bādīyah*) (Tamlin 2018: 379). The poem was called *ma humamhum Dhiban* – 'they don't care about Dhiban' and it was mostly a polemic against the 'rented pens' of the media who were provoking further protests and politicising the suffering of the Bani Hamida Bedouin, turning them into a national revolutionary symbol. These pen-wielding provocateurs and troublemakers are the subject of al-Hajaya's scorn as traitors to the ideal of Arab unity and spreaders of civil strife and national unrest, who feign solidarity and sympathy with the residents of Dhiban only to serve their own political interests and causes. However, the protesters themselves are treated en-masse as 'Bani Hamida' in his poems (although most

¹⁶ Winegar (2012) challenges the primacy of the image of the (male) public revolutionary in Tahrir Square, focusing on the experiences and undertakings of women during revolution.

Hamaydah in the villages are not involved with Hirak), glorified in the panegyric style of the ancient Arabic *qasīdah* (long-form poems about heroic subjects, often glorifying leaders, lineages and tribes). They are described as ‘the best of men’ and as watchful swords protecting Jordan, their women crying in adulation when they go into battle crying “*siyyah*” – the Hamaydah *nakhwah* described earlier. They are described as loyal to the homeland, even if sometimes angered by it, for they have not been treated as heroes should be. Much of this will be familiar from the Jabur land protesters’ Facebook statement discussed at the beginning of the chapter. The Hamaydah’s ability to criticise, it is implied, is a right given them by their loyalty and nobility of character. Conversely, the poem by implication delegitimises the anti-government talk of urbanites and other non-Bedouin seeking to make common cause. The poet, famous for his fierce denouncements of Western imperialism in the region couched in the language of Bedouin oral poetry on the topics of love and raiding, is known as a supporter of the royal house, of pan-Arab nationalism and also of tribal and Bedouin identity. The righteous fury of the residents of Dhiban is recast as a specific matter, tied up with their proud, fierce, independent sovereignty; its connection to wider fields of national political economy is denied. It is their business, their name, and should not be exploited by political agitators for their own gain.

Such moves of simultaneous association and disassociation, of in a sense tribalising the political and politicising the tribal, are common in Jordan. Ethnographically, I encountered many discourses and counter-discourses which threatened to collapse the distinction between *hoshah* and Hirak as modalities, blurring the boundaries. On the one hand, a set of discourses supported by many in the capital, and by certain state loyalists, casts Hirak as a matter of chauvinistic, anti-modern tribalism. On the other, many opposition activists seek to take matters the state might seek to label as ‘tribal’, and therefore to some degree not its concern, and to recast them as political uprisings driven by unfair or corrupt treatment from the state. In Jordan (and many places) the Weberian state exists alongside other semi-legitimised potential users of violence.¹⁷ Fields of overlapping sovereignty, clientship and mutual protection are encompassed at the highest level by the royal house. Antagonism, even revenge, that takes place within the limits of the *mahd al-qasr* can be tolerated to some degree, as it

¹⁷ Implicitly most theories of the state still rest upon Max Weber’s famous (1919) definition in his essay ‘Politics as a Vocation’: ‘a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory’ (Besteman 2002:3).

only confirms the state's ultimate role as final arbiter. However, this model of encompassment breaks down when other projects of sovereignty, couched in the language of shared honour, threaten to turn against the state, or at least the people who seem to many Jordanians to have captured it.

This point will become clearer with an ethnographic example. In late April 2018 I was working on a friend's farm in the north when a social media storm broke. Friends from many different groups and settings within Madaba and Amman were posting and re-posting various strands of commentary about a large *hoshah* in Madaba between the Sukhur and the Shuwabkah. I quickly headed back to Madaba, by which time men in pickup trucks with simple homemade painted Bani Sakhr banners had blocked the main road and were even firing bullets outside (although not at) the Governorate Office. A video was circulating widely on Facebook, showing the origin of the disturbance. Grainy mobile footage showed a man, revealed to be Zayid al-Fayiz, of the al-Fayiz Shaykhly lineage, at an ATM in Amman, where he was attacked by ten or more men in the street (apparently Shuwabkah), before being pushed into the road and beaten with an iron bar.

I feared this event might place me in a difficult situation. Most of my friends were Sukhur, yet Samer, my Arabic teacher and a close friend and important research collaborator, was Shuwabkah. He lived with his family in Juraynah, the main Shuwabkah village 5 km north of Madaba, the junction of which was now sealed off by the police and armoured vehicles to prevent any Sukhur protesters from attacking. I was concerned that I would be made to choose on which side of that cordon I remained, for the rest of fieldwork. That night I sat down in the coffeeshop with Hamid, Omar and Khalil, my closest Sukhur friends and pieced together the story. Then I called Samer, my Shuwabkah Arabic teacher, to check his family were safe. I had planned to visit him the next week in Juraynah – I asked if the roads would be open. He told me there would be no danger to me, but that I should go around the back way just in case, as the police would close the main junction as a precaution. When we met he told me the story in the empty back room of a coffeeshop, not because it was a secret, but because everyone would have an opinion on the story and would inevitably interrupt. 'But you should know' he said 'all this is over now. There is *'atwa* [truce]'. Over the coming days I heard bits of the story from all sorts of people.

The common outline was that in the past 'Aimad Shuwabkah, an Army officer assigned to the queen's security detail, had accompanied a royal visit to Madaba, where

a young Christian woman had tried to give him a petition for the king. He had supposedly been attracted to her, and had decided to take her number, arranging to meet and discuss the petition another time. He then, over several weeks, put mounting pressure on her to sleep with him, even threatening her children, according to the Sukhur story. At this point the woman had fled to the house of Zayid al-Fayiz, thinking his name and family's prestige would protect her.¹⁸ 'Aimad pursued, angry now, and demanded she come out of his house. When she refused, Zayid and his supporters apparently dragged 'Aimad away, although according to some Shuwabkah, they kidnapped him and beat him. Either way 'Aimad was humiliated and angry. At this point the situation threatened to go beyond the three individuals involved ('Aimad, Zayid, and the unnamed woman) and become a matter for revenge. Therefore, the traditional methods of dispute resolution (as described in Chapter 2) kicked in. Two senior members of both families met,¹⁹ leading to a formal reconciliation, carried out in the *dīwān Mithqal al-Fayiz*, the vast meeting hall erected by Mithqal's grandson Faisal as a self-styled 'gathering place for the Sukhur' (as described in Chapter 4). However, two days later, 'Aimad Shuwabkah made his attack in Amman on Zayid, and protests broke out in Madaba and beyond. The police arrested 'Aimad and brought the woman into protective custody (I am told by friends in Madaba she eventually emigrated to the United States). The Sukhur were demanding *jalwa* and *diyyah* (exile of the kin of the *qātil* kin and blood-money), as well as criminal prosecution of 'Aimad, according to the parallel civil and 'tribal' legal structure outlined in Chapter 2. After a few days of immense pressure representatives from both sides met and a new *'atwa* was established between both sides.

This story, modern in the details of the video, ATM and the social media driven response, contained many of the elements of classic Bedouin narratives. The central themes of desire, jealousy, revenge, factional discord and, most importantly of all, the sacredness and honourable nature of protection were on display. By offering protection, or rather accepting a request for it, Zayid was in a sense making a demonstration, or even a test, of his sovereignty and that of the various layers of name/space he was connected with. He was declaring himself, his house, and those under his protection to

¹⁸ There is a long and important precedent for shaykhly families and lineages to be seen to publicly offer or accept requests for sanctuary (see for instance Shryock 2004). It is both considered a sign of honour and generosity, and also a demonstration of power, in that it shows the granter's power to uphold sanctuary, even potentially against the law and the state.

¹⁹ These were member of Parliament, Zayid Ahmad al-Shuwabkah, and Sukhur politician, Faisal al-Fayiz.

be inviolate. It was this notion of protection, tied up with ideas of hospitality, as well as the threat of violation, that made the story piquant to a Jordanian audience. The crucial point upon which accounts differ was whether 'Aimad sought to breach this protection by attacking Zayid's house, or if Zayid attacked him outside. Regardless, the later attack of Zayid in the street, recorded publicly, demanded answer, and so a 'tribal clash' was inevitable.

I met to discuss the incident with Abdalaziz, Hamid's older brother. As I have already said, he was keen to encourage me to see and write history of the Bani Sakhr from a non-Fayiz perspective, and to tell 'the truth' about that family. He and his circle constantly tried to discourage me from getting to know people from al-Fayiz, or from visiting their village at Um al-'Amad. I was expecting a degree of ambivalence around supporting Zayid. However, his focus was on the need to act together, to prevent erosion of respect. He explained that the strength of the Sukhur was well known, and this was why many of them got good jobs in the military. If they *didn't* protest, then they might lose the respect of the state against which they were, indirectly, protesting.

Really, in truth the Shuwabkah are not famous, they have no origins...

People say, 'they have parsley in their blood'. But al-Fayiz are known as

Sukhur, they are famous shaykhs, even though in truth they are not...

distinguished. It is shameful they became the paramount shaykhs, but now...

it is shameful for them to be weak. People will say, how can the weak lead

the strong? So it is a matter of sharaf [honour], and because of this all

Sukhur feel the same on the matter.

It is through the operation and practice of claiming to protect, cover, and represent, I argue, that the honour of different people and groups at different scales becomes entangled. In this case, *al-Fayiz* is entirely encompassed and defined by the position of eminence, and by its widely known claim to leadership held by a few lineages among the thousands of families bearing the name. Yet this identification only extended problematically and in a limited, self-interested way beyond them into the general mass of people and families identified as Bani Sakhr, who might deny any special, permanent or substantive position to al-Fayiz, and yet still attach great significance to being Bani Sakhr.

Ahmad Oweidi took full advantage of the situation. 'This could be the spark' he explained. 'Of course it is not good that Shuwabkah and Bani Sakhr should fight. But it is not really about this. This dog 'Aimad, did he act as Shuwabkah, for his blood? No!'

He said the real issue was his misuse of his official position, and particularly the notion that the court, and especially the queen's household, harboured such venal characters. He admitted some *shabāb* from the Shuwabkah helped 'Aimad in this, but they were mere accessories. He added that 'no one thinks badly of them [Shuwabkah] usually, but the true Jordanians know they were never a great tribe, they are not *āsīl*, 'noble' like the Sukhur. So the people [*an-nās*] will not be with them'.

In the coming days he sent out a series of messages and statements, which focused on the queen's role in employing 'Aimad. He suggested that her powerful coterie was full of power-abusers, and the issue with 'Aimad Shuwabkah was emblematic. He was effectively turning a dispute between two men, who had already pulled in their families and wider kin networks, into a matter of the Bani Sakhr being victimised and disrespected by corrupt court figures. In the end, the agreed truce held, and Dr Ahmed gave up trying to fan this particular ember. However the atmosphere remained palpably disturbed, and the anti-queen sentiment persisted.

Dr Faris al-Fayiz (Zayid's cousin) an outspoken academic at the University of Jordan who had been active in the 2012 Hirak released a video on social media criticising the queen, and directly referring to her as *shaītanah* (she-devil). He was arrested under the so-called 'Hashemite Laws' that makes criticism of the royal family illegal. Members of the Fayiz lineage encouraged a general Sukhur demonstration, with Facebook groups using collective slogans and talk and a number of physical protests organised. Finally an ultimatum was delivered to the Government to release Faris, or 'the Sukhur' would block the main desert highway road connecting the capital to the airport and to the south of the country, where it passes close to the central Bani Sakhr town of Zizia. Two days later, after sporadic protest, this time less-well attended, it was announced that an *atwa* was in place, and that the Fayiz were satisfied with the Government's response, whereby Faris was released to loose house arrest. His cause remained though, and was taken up vocally by the Dhiban Hirak, who started claiming him as one of their own (despite the grievance between many Sukhur and Hamaydah). It was a statement by Ahmed Oweidi which began to make me consider how hard it is to draw firm boundaries between Hirak and *hoshah*, and how easily contesting discourses muddy the distinction. 'It is all contest' he said. 'The basis of the tribal system, it is war. The state, it is war. There is no difference'.

War and 'discord' (*fitnah*), is also crucial to counter-discourses that delegitimise unrest. An old man in the Jabal Bani Hamida told me; 'maybe the boys in Dhiban have

been pressed, *y'ani*, they have anger. But we are not Syria, we cannot do that here in Jordan'. The shadow of state disintegration and civil war falls heavily on protests in Jordan. I received many interpretations from my interlocutors of how the spectre of authoritarian rule in Egypt, civil war in Syria, and foreign invasion in Iraq had robbed the popular movements of support from those with the most to lose, particularly the urban middle class.²⁰ Putative opposition leaders go to considerable pains to avoid such allegations, often with mixed success. As Sabri told me once 'the Government tell the Americans, if there is an uprising, Islamists will take power. But we are secular, it is the Muslim Brotherhood who works with the state. 'Ali Brizart said it was essential to Jordan's long-term prospects that the West accept change in Jordan and see that the protesters were not *mutatārif* 'extremist'. There would, he said, be no civil war. 'We are all of us Jordanians, and the *qaba'il* will not fight among themselves anymore'. I asked him about incidents of *hoshah*, and the way they are used to discredit protests originating among Bedouin. 'These are a product of desperation and ignorance; not a true expression of *'usul 'ashirī* ('tribal' origins – in a sense akin to an idea of 'mentality'). The categories of *hoshah* and HIRAK are thus deeply interconnected but also heavily loaded and fraught. To be cast as a 'tribal' can alienate support as well as garner it. The ways interlocutors present and position different types of collective action is therefore always contextual and carefully related to audience sentiments.

6.6 Materialising and Sensing Protest

Differences between types of demonstration are reflected in sensual and aesthetic markers. Yet these also show how 'tribal clash' and 'political protest' become entangled. The Sukkur hung homemade banners from pickup trucks when closing the road to Juraynah – large lengths of black and blue fabric with white painted lettering. These looked almost identical to the banners made by students at the University of Jordan, going as a group defined by *'ashīrah* to take part in national political protests outside the office of the Prime Minister (Figure 6.2). The material and aural markers of protest are often confusingly appropriated and redeployed, in ways that allowed a variety of discourses to co-exist and compete (much as in Sian Lazar's 2015 analysis).

Many HIRAK protesters wore red-and-white *shmargh* headscarves. For some this was a demonstration of the parochial, tribal and chauvinistic concerns of the

²⁰ This discourse of Syria and elsewhere as negative exemplar is noted by others (Tobin 2012, Yitzhak 2018, Yom 2018).

protesters.²¹ For others it was an expression of national loyalty and even monarchism, as these colours are associated with peninsular Arab as opposed to Palestinian origins, and thus with the Hashemite regime. In part responding to this latter reading, Ahmed Oweidi al-‘Abadi began turning his red and white *shmargh* inside out, to differentiate himself from regime loyalists. He and his tribal-nationalist supporters in *Harakat al-Urdunīya* (‘The Jordanian Movement’) wore the *shmargh* on their head in the formal manner, while most protesters wore it as a scarf – simultaneously referencing and contesting its role as a symbol of tradition. At the University of Jordan, where I was affiliated as a researcher during the winter of 2018/2019, I was told by a friend ‘look at who brings in a *shmargh* on a Thursday who doesn’t wear one normally’ to work out who the protesters were in the office. The use of the headscarf and its East-Banker associations is mirrored by the frequent use of various styles of folk-dance that are considered to be culturally ‘Jordanian’ and non-Palestinian at protests. Meanwhile, as seen in the last chapter, (Figure 5.2) urban protesters regularly use bread as a symbol (and a placard), proclaiming not so much honourable sovereignty, but rather poverty, humility and dependence, highlighting the state’s duties to feed and protect its people, referencing older traditions of grain protests.

The physical form of protests is also a site of appropriation and contestation over aesthetic markers. Ahmad Oweidi’s political meetings were set up in a way that mimicked a tribal *majlis*, a meeting of shaykhs and men of influence in a tent, *dīwān* or outside, with rows of chairs for senior members, and with younger supporters standing behind with placards in a secondary, supportive role. The Hirak meetings meanwhile involved formal semi-public meetings of a similar sort, but also specific forms of sit-in like the unemployment tent, and more overt protests, with rings of placard-bearing chanters and often a loud-speaker through which one or more central figures addressed the crowd. Tents, a new feature in Jordanian protests, proclaimed conviviality, commensality and permanence, creating new forms of togetherness bound up with protest. Another form is marching through the streets as a demonstration of force, whether for overtly politico-economic reasons or as in the case of Faris al-Faiyz, for reasons supposedly more to do with collective honour. Several times interlocutors referred to this ironically as a *zaffah* – the large, noisy, celebratory but threatening

²¹ A West-Banker friend said ‘the black-and-white *kuffiyah* [now seen as ‘Palestinian’ and associated with the PLO], it means something when protesters wear it. The *shamrgh* though... what can it say but “more for us and our families”?’.

wedding procession carrying the bride from the groom's family house to that of the bride or to the party. This usually involves a long line of cars, sometimes decorated, flashing their lights, beeping their horns and playing music, which winds its way through the neighbourhood, sometimes with celebratory gunfire. As an expression of masculinity, patrilineal unity and strength, the *zaffah* certainly does have something of the logic of the demonstration.

Chanting is a key experiential dimension of protest. Chants circulate nationally, partially via shared video footage. The two I heard most were '*huriyah min allah, mish min aindak Abdullah* (freedom is from God, not from you, [King] Abdullah)' and '*ash-shab al-irdun 'arifyn mīn kabir min al-fasidīyn* (the people of Jordan know who are large among the corrupt)' the latter often being followed by angrily shouting the names of the corrupt, figures close to the court and the queen. Other chants were focused on economic reforms directly – '*mish faqir lakin ifqar, hatha nahjak ya dular* (we are not poor, but we were made poor, this is your policy, oh dollar)'. Osama told me one day that when chanting these phrases he felt ecstatically happy, his heart beating so loudly it would drown out everything else. This was very similar to how Omar Hagaish, mentioned earlier, described the feeling of fighting as a group on campus. It was sensually and emotionally unifying.

A further element of the aesthetics and materiality of protest is the venue. Protests in Islamic cities in the region have traditionally occurred after the Friday communal prayer where crowds gathered to hear the *khutbah* (a sermon that included the name of the sovereign). The small square outside the old Sharif Hussein Mosque in the old and run-down 'downtown' area of Amman has been the venue for such protests since the 1920s, and these are normally tolerated by the state, causing minimal disruption to traffic. However more recent protests deliberately break with this tradition, holding protests on other days, and in more disruptive and sensitive positions in affluent parts of West Amman. The *duwar* (the roundabouts that have replaced traffic intersections and actual squares in most Jordanian towns and villages) have become the main venue for protests. I was told often that since 2012, these roundabouts and other public spaces across the country, and especially in the capital, have slowly been fenced-off, benches and other elements encouraging people to linger have been removed, and trees and other objects put in to break up clear views. Empty plots near to protests sites are routinely fenced off. As space is privatised, the visibility and even possibility of

collecting to protest is limited, even as peaceful protest remains theoretically legal. ‘No Tahrir Square here’ as Said put it.

In Dhiban the initial protests and the raising of the unemployment tent happened in the intersection termed by locals *duwar al-hurīyah* – ‘the roundabout of freedom’. In May 2019, Osama told me he had ‘shocking news’. Government contractors had demolished the pedestal and decorative tower in the centre of the *duwar* (Figure 6.4). The townspeople were told the façade had been darkened by traffic fumes, and so the state was going to replace the stonework. The people of Dhiban were unconvinced and took to social media. Many Hamaydah people I knew who were sympathetic to HIRAK posted pictures of themselves in the *duwar* with Hiraki phrases, like ‘I am with the disobedience’ or ‘corruption means hunger’ (a slogan we saw expressed on bread, in Figure 5.2). Osama posted the demolition on Facebook proudly, as a sign of how seriously Dhiban and its people were taken; it demonstrated the Government understood their symbolic capital.

Figure 6.4: The demolition of Dhiban’s central roundabout’s tower, below a banner showing the use of the tower as a symbol for HIRAK Dhiban. Reproduced from a HIRAK Facebook post with permission.



6.7 *Duwar ad-Dakhliya* to *Duwar ar-Rabia*: Spring and Winter in Amman

The types of protest discussed intersect with broader national, regional and global dynamics. As Madaba was engulfed in unrest over the supposedly ‘tribal’ matter between the Shuwabkah and al-Fayiz, and the various rural Hirak protests smouldered in small towns across southern and central Jordan, national protests and the beginnings of broader cooperation began to appear. In January 2018 the bread subsidy had been reduced and the price of bread and many other staples nearly doubled in bakeries and shops. This mirrored the kind of economic decisions which had prefaced the mass demonstrations in March 2011 outside the Interior Ministry on *duwar ad-dakhliyah* (the ‘roundabout of the interior’). Then, in the spring of 2018 the Government announced a draft new Income Tax Law, as well as a further round of price adjustments, after talks with the IMF. The new annual threshold for personal tax was lowered to 10,000 JD. In a country where the minimum monthly wage is 211 JD, many would not be affected. However, it did expand discontent into a new section of the population; one better positioned to make their voices heard in the capital. Once again, a *duwar*, a roundabout, would be at the centre of things. A protest at *Ad-duwar ar-rabia* ‘the ‘Fourth Circle’ roundabout in West Amman and the location of the Prime Minister’s Office, grew to huge proportions and spread under this name to other towns, including Madaba. Protesting at this site, associated with the Government but not, significantly, the king, avoided both breaking the law and suggesting an existential threat to the regime.

Even while conventional media was silent on the unfolding drama, *al-Hirak al-Shabāby al-Urduny* – the Jordanian Youth League formed during the 2011-2012 protest – came out in force to support this protest on Facebook, and another Facebook page, entitled *ma’nash* (‘we have nothing’) began to attract large online crowds. My friends showed me each new protest with a mixture of anger and satisfaction, often adding that ‘now the king will listen’. New Facebook pages sprang up every day, but the main medium remained the closed WhatsApp group for forwarded content of videos of protests, inflammatory slogans, and calls for action. One particular example, which circulated for quite some time showed how aware Jordanian protesters have become of the structures in which they operate – a message explaining that Jordanians should now expect the Government, having accidentally united them with its punitive economic policy, to now seek to divide them along the traditional lines, using for instance a

football match between *Faisali* and al-*Wahadat* (the largest East-Banker and West-Banker football teams), or talk of northerners versus southerners in the media.

Nightly protests after Ramadan prayers formed at the Fourth Circle roundabout. The protests reached a peak on 30th May, with thirty three unions taking part in a General Strike (Ababneh 2018:n.p.), surprising the Government with its breadth of support. The crowds, who often had not yet broken fast, were volatile and angry. Osama went most days, but told me he did not like the mood, and feared it could turn ugly. On the morning of 1st June the Government announced the increase in fuel prices would be suspended, but the crowds did not disperse. While the protest in Amman at Fourth Circle remained peaceful (I heard many protesters talking to *Darak*) in Madaba (and also apparently in Irbid and Jerash) the crowds blocked the roads and, like the lorry-drivers in February, burned tyres, although the atmosphere of this event felt far more hostile. The heightened public mood typical of Ramadan where people tend to congregate in the streets after eating *Iftar* with family, became febrile, but proved short-lived. The *ad-duwar ar-rabia* targeted the unpopular Prime Minister, Hani Mulki for the most part, and so when on 3rd June he was sacked and replaced with the relatively unknown Education Minister Omar Razzaz, who soon announced a delay to the new taxes while they were reviewed, the protests petered out, with many posts celebrating having ‘removed’ Mulki. The more restive Hiraki protesters were dismayed, ‘nothing has changed! We want new policies not new politicians’ ‘Ali Brizāt said in a meeting in Dhiban. The political cartoonist Eimad Hajjaj aptly summarised the situation; a giant hand from an unseen body reaches down to unscrew an old burned-out lightbulb in the shape of Mulki’s head, while a new Razzaz-lightbulb is lowered into place (see Figure 6.5). Ultimately, financing from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf was found to satisfy the IMF. For Ababneh (2018:1) *ad-duwar ar-rabia* was ‘a popular rising against the neoliberal path on which the state has embarked.’ Yet for many this protest did not go nearly far enough. Criticism of the king remained muted, much to the disappointment of more critical voices. Their sentiment was reflected in Hajjaj’s cartoon. This forms part of a central discourse among both academics and opposition figures in Jordan, that the Prime Minister acts as a ‘shock-absorber’ for the king, to soak up public anger and then to be disposed of. There has been a long pattern in Jordan of defusing protest through cabinet reshuffles, and in the case of disturbances in Bedouin areas, often appointing

local leaders to high office and promising youth employment opportunities (Yom 2014).²²

Figure 6.5: Political cartoon by Eimad Hajjaj from Al-Araby News. The cartoon shows Mulki, the former PM, as a lightbulb, being replaced by a lightbulb in the shape of Omar Razzaz.



It was after this that *Hirak* began to emerge from media dormancy. No clear leadership of *ad-duwar ar-rabia* managed to emerge and the initially-prominent Council for Professional Unions caved in early by calling for an end to protests and was increasingly marginalised. The people still protesting had something very different in mind. Throughout late summer and autumn of 2018 regular protests began in rural locations once more, organised via bolder and more inflammatory Facebook groups. People were posting things on their public walls on Facebook that previously had only been shared on private messages on WhatsApp. In September 2018 a large week-long strike and civil disobedience was called for on Facebook by a group claiming to speak for all the rural *Hirak* groups and the labour unions, and many interlocutors placed its symbol as their profile picture on Facebook (see Figure 6.6). As one interlocutor put it ‘the fear is gone’. The Government at this time began preparing a response; new laws to criminalise anti-government talk on social media (as described).

²² A discourse which sees protest as alerting a benevolent monarch to the abuses of his corrupt functionaries.

Figure 6.6: Facebook banner for civil disobedience campaign – the text reads ‘I am with the civil disobedience’.



Protests on Thursday evenings at the Fourth Circle continued most weeks during the winter of 2018-2019, when I returned to Jordan.²³ The winter Thursday protests were almost entirely without shape or unity, as though separate protests were merely coinciding. A plethora of Facebook groups and event pages advertised and advocated for the protests, some targeting the urban poor, or those on the cusp of paying higher taxes, others targeting those concerned with free speech. Many different groups (themselves often unstable alliances of disparate interests) attempted to curate the protests, suggesting specific names and titles, from ‘the Thursday March for Dignity’ to ‘We are not silent’!

When I attended in December 2018, I was struck by how different to the Dhiban Hirak protests it looked and sounded, and from the protests that June. Travelling to the protest by shared taxi with a group of Dhiban Hirak supporters from the University of Jordan, we rehearsed protest chants and discussed where best to stand. On arrival though, we were met by a cacophony, where no individual chant or voice rose above the rest. The Thursday protests, often in bitter cold and rain, have taken on their particular form as a consequence of the semi-repressive response they draw from the state security apparatus and the divergent desires of those who take part. The roads around are blocked, making it hard for the protesters to gather, and the police, while not preventing

²³ I returned to take up a position as a research associate working with Dr Sara Ababneh, who has written on these protests (2016, 2018) at the Centre for Strategic Research at the University of Jordan in Amman.

attendance heavily discourage it verbally and through misdirecting those trying to enter. By December the roundabout itself was blocked off, and protesters were only permitted to gather in a quieter nearby side-street. Here a large hospital carpark served as a venue. Reactions to this varied. One contact from the University said ‘we are talking to a wall. This is what the Government wants’. For it meant that the opportunity for direct confrontation with the security services was limited, preventing matters escalating. ‘The fence’ as one student in the crowd told me ‘is our ally’. All around the hospital carpark, various different figures, including Ahmed Oweidi and Hind al-Fayiz stood and spoke, surrounded by small knots of supporters. It more resembled a political fair, with different stalls selling their own visions, than a demonstration.

Afterwards Hind’s supporters said she had done well – ‘you had the most *Mukhabarāt*’. Attendance by plain clothes security personnel has become an accepted part of these protests. Expressionless hard-looking men in leather jackets stood at the front of the crowds around many speakers, videoing everything that was said. I asked if the recording would have consequences. Hind’s aides said they thought not but that they could be used to bring civil libel charges. She never spoke against the monarchy, although many others did. When responses did come, they tended to be unsettling but relatively restrained, and most of all utterly opaque. Hind was arrested, she told me, in July 2019 for tax evasion. She was held for 24 hours, before being released. ‘This is just to shake me’ she said. People are regularly picked up at random, held for a few days, threatened, and then generally let out again. Hind now runs a WhatsApp dedicated to people who fear they are about to be taken by the *Mukhabarāt*. If they message Hind, she will speak to government contacts, and tell them that, if this person has not messaged her back by a certain time to let her know they are safe and free, she will post their disappearance on social media.

I was asked repeatedly what I was doing there, and on 13th December Police told me it was ‘not safe’ for a foreigner and I was sent away, even though I knew colleagues and friends from the University would be present. My mistake had been to come alone and approach from the wrong direction.

In the cold, rainy winter evenings of December, the numbers rarely looked to be much over a thousand, but still the Security service attempts to block them brought the capital to a weekly gridlock (the avoidance of which had been the Government’s excuse for refusing protests at the *duwar*). The state has resisted any attempts to measure numbers. The flyover above the road to Fourth Circle was blocked – the only vantage

point from which the scale of the protest might be visible.²⁴ Facebook event pages often received more than 5,000 clicks of ‘interested’, but those who clicked ‘going’ numbered in the low hundreds. Anecdotally it seemed the June protests had acquired much greater numbers. Increasingly the winter protests seemed to be driven by short-lived Facebook groups, which often posted statements listing cooperating movements (including the regional Hiraks). These same shadowy social media groups started posting YouTube videos of ‘Ali Brizāt’s and Sabri’s speeches and chants in Dhiban. In most interviews, hints or suggestions were dropped that behind the flood of organisational and promotional material on Facebook was the hand of hidden coordinators. Some attributed this to members of the *Mukhabarāt* who opposed the king or Queen Rania. Though protests continue and have acquired some mass at various points (especially July 2019), the new tax laws and the new social media bill were both passed. In the bitter cold of the Fourth Circle protests, it seemed the spring had turned to winter, and the message had become lost in its medium.

6.8 Failures of Leadership?

The Hirak protests, especially in light of their failure to achieve what most activists consider their ends, have raised important questions about the nature of leadership in rural, putatively tribal central and southern Jordan. Economic norms and the reproduction of ‘Bedouin’ as national symbol and cultural exemplar favours the authority of elite, mostly older men from certain lineages.²⁵ With economic reforms, the privileged inclusion of these men in a governing elite has become precarious (especially in the countryside) as they cannot offer social reproduction to their clients or younger kin. They have thus started to mobilise the categories on which their positions rest in protest, rather than support, of government. This can be seen in figures like Hind and Faris al-Fayiz, and ‘Ali al-Brizāt, from leading shaykhly families, with inherited reputation and an amplified voice. But alongside the role of some elite figures in protests are widespread attempts to criticise and even to render irrelevant shaykhly authority entirely, while keeping the structure of ‘*ashīrah*’ intact.

The source of such dissatisfaction is obvious; patronage fails to provide the degree of redistribution and mediation that people believe it should. The very wealthy

²⁴ Private drones are illegal in Jordan.

²⁵ Not necessarily the hereditary shaykhs, often in fact members of side-lineages or other associate families, who have become rich or through one individual gained access to prominent offices.

and powerful, like the Fayiz family, seem removed from those they theoretically might represent, their wealth allowing them to cut ties that are no longer useful. One Sukhur youth from a less powerful lineage in the Village of Natl expressed his problems with the leading figures in the 'ashīrah of al-Fayiz:

If I have a problem, perhaps I am arrested, or perhaps I have been cheated out of money, or someone wants to take a bribe from me, I need to go to someone close to me who is also known and respected. Someone of whom it is said 'he is a fixer of problems, he is respectable' ... but if I go to Um al-'Amad and call 'ya Faisal, [Faisal bin-Akif al-Fayiz, the former Prime Minister] fī warta ('there is a big problem/catastrophe') he will not say 'ibsha ('go ahead/let me help you') and pour for me coffee and so on. What will happen? His secretary will ask if I have an appointment, and will send me away. If I don't go they will beat me.

This shows the limitations of the 'shaykhs-eye' view of history in contemporary Jordan which assumes the collectivities that shaykhs represent are real sources of obligation between wide groups of people. It also shows the limits of readings that see the notion of a social contract or moral economy as useful for holding the powerful to account. Certain families have used such unwritten agreements with the state and their clients to forge their own powerbases, built on but increasingly independent from their representative roles. However where claims to connection and mutual obligation fail, those cut-off from networks of sovereignty begin to turn against them. As seen above, and as Hughes argues (2018, 2019) this does not mean the end of significance for 'ashā'ir. Rather these categories have taken on new and different forms; indeed their Facebook and meme-friendly manifestations are closer to the broad and undifferentiated types of solidarity and tendency to cohere that critics of 'tribalism' have long had in mind. The intermediary role may be changing hands, and the ability of shaykhs to represent sovereignty to both the state and their own clients may be waning, but ideas of tribal or Bedouin sovereignty, albeit complex and historically contingent ideas, retain currency in the new political arena of mass protests. This new sovereignty, more diffuse and negatively defined as the absence of full bureaucratic state power, rests not in shaykhs, but in far wider collective ideals, of names and places that cannot be eaten.

6.9 Conclusions

I have argued for a move beyond seeing tribal clashes and political protests as distinct forms of unrelated demonstrative act. The ways in which Hiraq and *hoshah* become entangled and collapse into each other, and the way different discourses seek to redraw the boundary between them, is metonymic for the wider ways in which the politics of the state and notions of tribalism reflect and reproduce one another. In another sense, I have suggested, both Hiraq and *hoshah* represent a challenge to and a breakdown of the established order, through which tribes and the state co-reproduce one another. The controlled and genealogically precise disputes of the past, never quite ended, have morphed into something new, which touches upon the seemingly dissimilar domain of the political protest. The demonstrations of collective power and potential violence facilitated by social media and the growing alternative social sphere generated by young people interacting with each other outside of settings controlled by their older relatives are clearly both implicated in a changing pattern of everyday politics.

Yet the older modes of political imaginary that I began to tease out in Chapter 2 retain a conceptual relevance to the shape this change takes: ideas of honour, protection, representation and protected, semi-sovereign spaces that may be encompassed to various degrees but never quite eaten or digested. The Hiraq protesters do not see their activism and resistance as being a cause they take part in despite their traditional categorisation as Bedouin tribal subjects, with the various culturalist tropes and associations such labels conjure up. Rather for them, other meanings of this tribal and Bedouin past in fact inform and enable their resistance, and what is more, in ways that are recognised and significant to young Bedouin far beyond the limits of those who openly support the Hiraq movement, including Facebook agitators and Bani Sakhr scufflers on university campuses. Being Bani Sakhr or Bani Hamida (and at higher resolutions, being part of particular *'asha'ir* and lineages) involves certain perspectives on history, as we have seen. Which historical elements are emphasised is to some degree contingent. Increasingly, as important as poetry and genealogy, is an idea of a fierce, noble and sovereign past, and of a coming of the state bought about through alliances and 'techniques of interpersonal association', not through mere coercion. From such an imaginary emerge not only the idea of people and places that cannot be eaten, but also of a moral economy, of a host-guest alliance being usurped and twisted into something else. The idea of tribe then, and its associations in Arabic, is important at a historical and structural level in accounting for the presence of protests in certain rural

districts, and the form these protests take, in creating the conditions of possibility for a degree of frank criticism of power without overt fear. Not least, the state has removed most other for a for discussion and organisation, through constantly clamping down on and limiting unions and labour movements. Ideas of tribal authority have been facilitated by the state as a-political and naturalised alternatives. At the level of overt ideology tribes may seem a-political, with those who make use of such notions ranging on the political spectrum from Ba'athists to right-wing nativist nationalists, chanting 'Jordan for the Jordanians'. Yet both at the everyday level of engaging in collective action, dispute resolution and mediated negotiations with the state, and at the structural level, the political quality of ideas of name/space categories become clear.

Breaks with the imaginary of a tribal past are also key to explaining the ways different types of collective action are labelled and argued over in public discourse. Both Facebook agitators committing acts of violence outside the limits set by '*awa'id*' and overtly revolutionary Hirak activists tend to be young, underemployed, poor and importantly, as we have seen in the last chapter, facing uncertain or blocked routes towards social adulthood and reproduction. As such, their part in the imagined bargain of the moral economy, and the links that tie them in obedience to older kin, are increasingly in question during the long years of waithood, as links through which resources necessary for life are shared are stretched to breaking point.

The power and wealth of those calling themselves shaykhs rests, and has rested at many times across history, upon their ability to mediate between urban-based dynasts and marginal populations, claiming to each to be uniquely able to represent and to influence the other; to ensure peace in their districts and votes at elections for the state, and in turn to promise jobs, services and bureaucratic favours to their own 'people'. Some controlled display of violence and ability to bring together bodies in the street might form part of their claims to wield potential force, and to represent volatile and fierce people who without them would prove ungovernable. But when violence rocks the state too much and crucially without their control as part of a guided strategy, where the clients they represent start going over their heads, or where they become more closely associated with the Government rather than their own people, their representative role breaks down. Those demonstrative acts dismissed as *hoshah* are so dismissed, and are described as random and arbitrary, precisely because they are not under the direction of shaykhs. As much as Facebook feud-stoking and 'tribal clashes', the refusal of the rural Hirak protesters to stop protesting after being offered the normal

inducements through *wāstah* and patronage challenges carefully negotiated and state-encompassed projects of representative sovereignty. This system relies at its base on the promise of important reputational and material benefits to those who make use of it; help finding work and business opportunities, help with legal problems, bureaucracy, support in disputes and other favours. Where patrons cannot or choose not to deliver, people will go to those who can, even if they do not have any acknowledged categorical claim.

This has allowed new types of everyday politics and political figures to emerge, connected to the broader emergence of the figure of the *wāstah* holder, the new influential intermediary and broker, who relies on his or her own reputation, contacts and position. One way to gain such a reputation is through making money or gaining important jobs. But another is to claim solidarity and political support through stoking grievances. The way Sukhur youths organised via Facebook have led in protests at ground level rather than the senior al-Fayiz men, or the Jabur shaykhs' concern that their land protest over al-Qatanah was getting out of control in the hands of ambitious Facebook organisers, are examples of this. Even more concerning to traditional authority figures and to government officials are cases where a formal settlement between old men of leading families is disregarded by young men, who continue violence without genealogical precision or guidance from their elders, as in the case of the Shuwabkah/al-Fayiz feud. More broadly, as I have described, many Jordanians see tribes outlasting shaykhs; a matter of intense concern for some, especially those wishing to claim traditional tribal authority. So too in the rise of the agitator *par excellence* Dr 'Ahmed Oweidi, who defeated his shaykhly 'Abbad rivals to win election to Parliament, do we see a demonstration of the power of new men to win notoriety and build political solidarity through tribal categories and using traditional language, but dispensing with traditional genealogical sources of authority. Oweidi told me his rivals for political dominance among the 'Abbad, proud of their own shaykhly lineage names would never have thought, as he did, to adopt the name al-'Abbadi as his own name on the ballot. Now it is men like Dr Ahmed and his younger associates, not these shaykhly families, that are agitating for the restoration of 'tribal' land, as we have seen in Chapter 3, but not as shaykhly appanage or even 'communal' land whose usage is directed by elder authority figures, but rather a nebulous but concrete sense of individually profitable but somehow equitable 'ownership'. These calls fall on fertile ground among

many of my young interlocutors, unable to make progress with their lives and fearful for the future.

In Chapter 3, I showed how broad solidarities and intersubjectivities of name and geography tend to be closely linked to more specific and material interests and differentials, especially around the use, ownership and sale of land. This basis to my analysis may seem like a move away from recent trends in anthropologies of protest, and indeed broader trends in Middle Eastern ethnography. Nevertheless, I maintain the centrality of political economy for understanding and connecting varied and contradictory experiential accounts. Conceptions of grievances articulated via a moral economy come into focus here, and varied histories of land settlement and of land claim strategies provide a deep grammar to much contemporary politics. In the various forms of protest I have considered, and the ways in which my Bani Sakhr and Bani Hamida interlocutors experienced protest, unrest and the potential for tribal resistance and sovereignty differently, this connection to the deep grammar and moral economy of land, settlement and the historical dynamics of state encompassment is essential. Relationships to imagined histories are conceptualised in part through land as a sight of former wealth, mobility and security, as well as present concerns over inequity, corruption and seizure, and future dilemmas and unease over inheritance and solidarity. These imagined histories in turn shape the conditions of possibility within which actors make the decision to answer or ignore calls for collective action, to acknowledge or break with traditional precedents and modes of authority, and to continue or to disavow the model of representative sovereignty by which Bedouin tribes are tied to the royal house and the state.

7 CONCLUSION: THE STRANGE CONTINUITY OF RUPTURE

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language.

Marx (2008:26).

At the core of this dissertation lies the question of why and how the Bedouin villages of Madaba and their inhabitants come to be reproduced as ‘Bedouin’ and as members of specific ‘*ashā’ir* (and indeed other levels of name/space category) even as the historical circumstances that once rendered such categories significant are transformed. The idea of being Bedouin, Bani Sakhr, or Dahamshah, or even of an ‘*ashīrah* in general, necessarily draw on ideas and images of the past, but as I have shown, are only made meaningful through specific historical circumstances. They are meaningful through being both historically contingent, while also being a property of identity imagined, in a sense, to survive the process of history. As such questions of continuity and change loom large in this analysis, and as a theme which brings all the preceding chapters

together, it is on these questions that I conclude. The epigraph from Marx is to my mind among the most evocative expressions of the longstanding and anguished concern in the social sciences around balancing continuity and change, event and structure.

I have shown how the idea of Arab *‘ashā’ir*, and the broader conceptual area of the name/space is multi-faceted and contingent. They can and have been considered in various ways: as kinship networks, as social or political organisations and categories, as economic units of production, as social construction, and as ideology. Clearly each of these dimensions of meaning have some utility for analysing tribes, and to some degree overlap. Yet the applicability and degree of overlap of these terms is not constant. At different historical moments these dimensions come into play and mingle with each other in different ways.

I began to explore this historical contingency in the introductory historical sketch in Chapter 1; mapping out the semantic field of the various terms applied to the Arabic-speaking nomadic pastoralists and semi-nomads living in the *Bādīyah* of *Bilad ash-Shām*, exploring how each left its mark upon the conceptual options open to future periods and polities, as well as setting out the ways various branches of occidental scholarship have sought to grasp and make sense of this history. I continued this process in Chapter 2, tracing firstly the anthropological freight behind ideas of tribes and especially Bedouin in the Middle East, as well as how this has intersected with Arabic and Ottoman thought. I then went on to consider the ways that various practices and institutions, in which the state has been complicit thorough Ottoman imperial, colonial and post-independence periods, reinforce and give infrastructural reality to these ideas in the contemporary, suggesting a way out of the debates between cultural constructivists and those who take tribes seriously as an ethnographic reality.

Also in Chapter 2, through mingling historical and ethnographic analysis, I made a case for saving certain ideas from the wreck of post-Orientalist critique and especially from work on segmentation, while dispensing with much of the focus on descent and kinship. Instead, I focused on the importance in contemporary Jordanian politics of names, reputation, honour, and networking and asking favours; all especially associated with tribes and Bedouin, who are cast as the ancestral origin and exemplars of such practices. I explored ethnographically how names, and often associations with places, as well as certain dispositions to do with protection, representation and sovereignty, often persist over long periods of time and across considerable historical change, and though they make use of genealogy and talk of blood, these things are secondary to politics,

which over large distances are able to reshape imaginaries of genealogical relatedness and shared ancestry. I sought to analyse how the importance of names, reputations, and governing through techniques of interpersonal association (via local intermediaries and representatives) have long been associated with certain types of marginal political space. Moreover, I looked at how this mode of political thought, which I term representative sovereignty, has proven surprisingly adaptable to change, creating stable socio-political categories, even though the contents of such categories, and the way they are deployed in everyday politics, is historically contingent.

I went on in Chapter 3 to trace the history of land and conceptions of land ownership in my field site through this process of historical contingency. I showed the lingering traces of colonial interventions and more recent neoliberal reforms, but also how the commodification of land here remains incomplete. As far as a land market exists, it relies on the creative redeployment and ambivalent legal space given to older ways of relating to land and to others through it, some of which are pre-colonial. Furthermore, I analysed the moral economy of how Jordanian Bedouin have been settled and rendered subject to the nation-state, as well as the ways this process of settlement remains partial and shows signs at times of unravelling.

In Chapter 4, I looked in more detail at the Bedouin villages as a type of political space. The world of family and genealogical solidarity offers the potential for a sort of politics without politics, I argue; a space where obligations to kin are entangled with the projects of representation for these few senior men from powerful lineages to whom influence is deferred. The politics of *wāstah*, hospitality and the *dīwān* occur in a space neither public and civil, nor private and domestic, but which remains central to the everyday experience of political economy in Jordan.

In Chapter 5 my ethnographic focus switched from the top of this hierarchical politics to its malcontents; the various bored, dissatisfied and restless young Bedouin facing dilemmas about how best to socially reproduce and to find a meaningful life, explored through the lens of consumption. In this chapter I also show how both representative elites and new alternative figures of social significance, some of whom challenge the gerontocratic and genealogical leadership of shaykhs, continue to present the categories they claim to stand for as name/spaces that cannot be ‘eaten’ by the state.

Finally, I examined in Chapter 6 the experiences of rural protest, from the scale of the individual up to that of political discourse. I focused on the cultural understandings and the conceptual and political economic conditions of possibility that

enable everyday collective demonstrations of partially shared purpose, showing how broad social categories and names linking thousands of people (behind which lie long and significant histories) are used to make claims in the present. Large, powerful interest groups like these can be seen as categories through and on behalf of which some powerful individuals claim to ‘speak’, but this side-lines the question of how and why ordinary people choose to use labels like Bani Sakhr and Bani Hamida — the collective significance of belonging to an *‘ashīrah* for land ownership, shared honour and reputation. I showed both the potential to distinguish between long-standing forms of self-consciously ‘tribal’ collective demonstrations and more overtly revolutionary and wide-ranging political activism, and the difficulties in keeping these forms apart. New forms of social media and youth-driven protest challenge distinctions, while older proponents of traditional authority seek to variously conflate or pull apart Bedouin identity and protest movements for their own ends. In all this, certain ideas, which I began to explore in earlier chapters, around the continuing power of names, of claims to protection and to sovereignty, to representation and mediation, and of places marginal and not amenable to full bureaucratic state government, come to the fore. Even in revolutionary protests, ideas of Bedouin and tribe are reproduced in ways that go far beyond their shallow manipulation and repurposing by colonial and post-colonial policymakers.

Returning more theoretically to questions of continuity and change, keeping continuity with a pre-colonial past in mind might at once seem more *and* less justified in the specific case of Jordan and greater Syria. More; because the experience of colonial rule was comparatively indirect and short-lived, though impactful, and was preceded by a form of imperial rule under the Ottomans which defies easy categorisation as ‘colonial’. What is more, in both cases very ancient linguistic, legal and institutional forms, bearing the marks of past empires, have been reproduced. Yet simultaneously less; because of the long and pervasive influence of Orientalist and othering tropes, and because of Jordan’s specific context of modernisation and nationalism explored by Massad (2001).

In broader anthropological terms, an interest in history may be theoretically fashionable, but a stress on *longue durée* continuity is more problematic. Joel Robbins (2007), in developing his particular anthropology of Christianity and Christianisation in Melanesia, problematises the tendency of anthropologists working in some areas to partake in ‘continuity thinking’; accusing these scholars of drawing out examples (often

tenuous and highly selective) of continuity, bridging periods of profound rupture, and in the process often obscuring or explaining away ethnographic accounts of radical change, such as that experienced by recent converts to Christianity, as a ‘thin veneer’. However, his proposal to reorientate works towards rupture dichotomises continuity and change in a way that when applied to the material of my thesis, I argue would prove unhelpful and misleading.

A crude reading of my argument might suggest that I see Jordan’s history as one of hidden continuities. Under a veneer of modernity imposed by colonial rule and capitalist reforms, older tribal dynamics persist, much as do the various practices and cosmologies that supposedly survive Christian conversion in the accounts that Robbins’ takes aim at. Equally though, there is plenty in this dissertation, especially in the ethnographic material, that would support Robbins’ case for an analytical preoccupation with rupture: narratives of change, of the decline of pastoralism, the increase in state and market power, and the division between the ‘age of shaykhs’ and the ‘age of government’ (a conceptual before and after), not to mention the more recent economic crisis. In contrast to either of these polarised positions, I contend that the most interesting part of the problem is not in deciding whether to emphasise continuity or change, but in working out the ways in which they interact. Clearly, elements of both continuity and change are present in the ethnographic material I have analysed here, both in terms of historical events and in terms of the ways different people reflect on and make use of that history, stressing rupture or continuity depending on the context and their own position. More significantly, I suggest here that the ways in which patterns of tribal association and the politics of patronage in Jordan have changed over time only make sense when we consider continuity and change together. How and why new developments, ideas and structures are received, and the new forms such innovations create, can only be understood in terms of the preceding historical dynamics. These historical dynamics in turn only make sense when considered in terms of how they have been interpreted by people dealing with specific situations and faced with particular events.

To return to the epigraph, the question that interests me is which pre-existing circumstances constrain how people make their own histories, which nightmares press upon the brains of the living, which spirits of the past are conjured up, and which names, slogans and costumes are made to seem continuous, relevant and essential to the contemporary moment. The power of protection and hospitality as organising principles

in contemporary Jordan are not merely shallow inventions of the colonial or neoliberal state. Forming and maintaining associations to protect scarce and essential resources – once wells, herds or tributary farmers; now land, housing, jobs and the less-tangible *wāstah* – is a well-established method of furthering and protecting sovereignty, and one that in Jordan and elsewhere has made use of idioms of genealogy and the agnatic transmission of wealth and roles between generations. The royal house and the financial elite in Jordan may have found ways to work with and through such projects, but they are not their authors, any more than are previous dynasties, though in each case they leave their mark. This is not to say that these practices and modes of social categorisation are native, authentic expressions of a timeless and largely bounded culture. The marks of empires and polities run far too deep for that, and it is clear that much of this world has been shaped by their presence and intervention, even when indirectly. Claims to representative sovereignty, and the type of categories it gives rise to, tend to occur at the margins of, and as such in co-production with, urban states. It allows a particular type of political project of rulership to emerge. It is a changing but recognisably related set of relations to power and to place, bound up with aesthetic and even poetic qualities, that persists in talk of being Dahamshah or Fayiz; Bani Sakhr or Bani Hamida or ‘Adwan, or of being Bedouin.

For some scholars, like Massad (2001), the significance of tribal structures and discourses of Bedouin cultural identity is primarily as forms of political life that the state (and more specifically the royal house) has reinvented, managed and incorporated into the body politic, firstly during colonial rule, and since the 1970s as part of a nation-building exercise in opposition to, but entangled with, that of Palestine. However, Massad’s argument, and those of other post-Orientalist proponents of constructivism, has little to say on why ‘Bedouinity’ was chosen or was so successful in gaining traction compared to other putative cultural assemblages, other than to point out the military reliance of British-sponsored Hashemite rule on certain Bedouin military leaders and their claims to represent powerful armed communities loyal to them, later reproduced due to fear of the Palestinian internal-other. The political and geographical weakness of Jordan is used to explain this reliance, when compared to Iraq and Syria. So far, so compelling. Yet why then do similar social forms and practices also persist in varied ways in Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and across into North Africa, without the same degree of state encouragement or valourisation? For all Massad seeks to explain and fix a recent origin to these phenomena, implicitly this argument merely defers the problem

back further in time; what previous layer of construction was being retooled for new purposes by colonial and national rulers? At the other end of the analytical scale, his argument has little to say on how people caught up in such categories experience them; on why, in a sense, this constructivist effort succeeded, when so many others failed. To my interlocutors, the fact that their social thinking and practices have been useful or encouraged by the royal house for its own political aims does not make them insincere or inauthentic.

Continuity, like historical contingency, cannot be taken as a neutral or straightforward fact to be read from history. It is always a claim, a perspective and an emphasis which carries within it political judgements upon the present. I have suggested that tribes are frequently reproduced by history, and that even when categories, names or concepts are stable over time, their significance changes rapidly. However certain elements, in particular the conceptual or structural relationship between tribes and states, seem to be long-lasting, and to survive the profound changes in political economy and the nature of tribal authority. Even as nomadic pastoralism declined and tribes became untethered from the leadership of shaykhs, ideas about the power of names, of patronage and of representation, came to exert an increasing pull in Jordan. This is not to say change or rupture are insignificant, but rather to show how change and rupture takes place. These elements of continuity are in a sense the mechanism by which tribes are historically emergent and reproduced into new historical circumstances.

Like earlier debates around 'legal pluralism' (Merry 1988) and discussions in the 1980s and 1990s around 'plural', 'alternative' or 'vernacular' modernities (Englund and Leach 2000), such concerns with continuity or change seem to turn on how anthropology should deal with and respond to histories that stretch beyond living memory. Clearly one could argue tribes and tribalism are a way for anthropologists to see continuity with a pre-colonial past, and indeed a past of indigeneity, where Bedouin were autonomous and self-sufficient. It is the potential for such readings, in part, that has made the topic of tribes such a critically problematic one for post-Saidian scholars working on the Middle East (see Abu Lughod 1989). But such a reading is hardly sustainable. Even the scholars (like Dresch, Shryock and Scheele) stressing continuity are doing so because of a long, literate history of interactions and transregional connections, that allowed history writers from tenth century Yemen or Ottoman Algiers to reflect on and be aware of how socio-political forms persist and change across time and space. The edge of the Syrian steppe in Jordan has never been

isolated, never entirely autonomous and has always been exposed to history writ large, leaving literate traces behind. The mistake would be to assume, as proponents of modernisation theory often did, that these dynamics should always prove conducive to literate legal and religious culture, peasant cultivation, powerful states or urban-based dynasties. Alternative forms oscillate between sovereignty and encompassment, occasionally seizing cities and states, or being forced to settle. Meanwhile certain ideas around politics, both at the level of the nation and at the level of the family, have been reproduced and reshaped many times, but recognisably relating to what went before. This set of ideas, around honour, reputation, protection, association and representation, especially as they relate to names and to the ability of names to entangle individuals together, is, I argue, the key to understanding both the survival and the re-purposing and reinvention of ideas of being Bedouin and being tribal in contemporary Jordan.

Throughout this thesis I have made the case for a re-appraisal of tribalism, both as a broad anthropological and political category, and as a heuristic or gloss used to name and explain certain features of historical and contemporary life in Jordan. I argue that the political content of talk of blood and genealogy becomes clearer as it becomes less literal, and likewise it becomes more clearly embedded both in specific historical events and in *longue durée* structures. As argued, these facets need not be contradictory, and nor is this process of historical emergence and reproduction over. Key to my attempts to re-appraise tribalism has been the concept of representational sovereignty – a type of limited and often encompassed sovereignty which works through discursive claims to representation and to solidarity between hosts and guest, protectors and the protected, and at the last, patrons and clients. Yet these elements may, as I have suggested, be drifting apart. I have in the preceding chapters considered two increasingly discordant dimensions to the political life of *‘asha’ir* in contemporary Madaba. On the one hand are the uses of such idioms in claims to offer mediation and patronage, sustaining shaykhs but also creating new types of patron; made through categories of name/space but also through other networks often called *wāstah*. On the other are the use of socio-political self-identifiers in fields of mass mediation and ways of claiming broad solidarities in the face of a widespread sense of a bifurcated or fractured nation. The idea of a variegated citizenry and a nation of parts, leads to a certain understanding of the state, focused on exclusion, sovereignty and protection, of

places and people ‘too bitter’ to eat, who must be governed with particular care and in a particular style.¹

To conclude, I now consider the trajectories of these two forces, of representation and of solidarity, exploring how as they diverge the meaning of identity labels in this setting change too, but the labels themselves show every sign of, once again, outlasting the events that (re)produced them in their current form. In so doing, I bring into view some of the contemporary pressures, tensions and directions for re-imagining that will continue the dialogical process of continuity and change described so far, as well as reflecting, once again, on history.

The area now Jordan passed from being on the margins of an Ottoman imperial order to the margins of a British colonial one, and with this shift certain techniques of government, legibility and discipline shifted. Throughout this period, the concern of the state was to settle a difficult terrain, partially inhabited by nomadic pastoralists, and politically fragmented. As Amir Abdullah sought to rule and settle his rebellious frontier-polity using British funding and support, his putative sovereignty, like that of his Ottoman predecessors, flowed fluidly around seeming obstructions, finding ways to make use of or at least live with them. These were name/spaces long considered to be resistant to outside rule and to possess their own mode of rebellious and nested sovereignty; they could not easily be ‘eaten’. He and his government and successors set about loosely encompassing these other semi-sovereign spaces by binding to him those who claimed to lead and represent them, through a technique of interpersonal association whereby they shared with him in the proceeds of the state. This looser and uneven style of state government (in comparison to Jordan’s neighbours), not merely permitting but relying on clientelism, was especially pronounced in its rural hinterlands, but discursively reflected throughout Jordan through talk of affiliation and *wāstah*.

Tribes and Bedouin in Jordan, as elsewhere, may at this time have seemed to be pre-national and pre-modern concepts, soon to disappear, but since the 1980s they have increasingly come to the fore; a waxing coinciding with the adoption of certain new economic logics, often termed neoliberal. Decades of liberalising economic reform, mass migration and a persistent but arguably worsening crisis over land and housing (described in Chapter 3) have seen social welfare decrease and most political life pushed out of official channels, fostering a widespread suspicion and cynicism about the

¹ The focus on incorporation here should not disguise the other side to any act of grouping, the exclusion of others, especially Palestinian others, an area on which I intend to work further in future.

potential for development. This has left 'kinship'-based associations, unofficial patronage networks, and the idiom of name/space categories as some of the few alternatives for political action. As such, talk of blood, family and tribes is reproduced.

Ideas, forms and practices emerging (or imagined to emerge) from the context of Bedouin or '*Arāb 'ashā'ir*', back when these were political alliances of semi-sovereign shaykhly lineages claiming to represent broad groups of nomadic and semi-settled herders, were accommodated by state-building processes, and are now prevalent across a very different political environment, sometimes with little connection to this past. Yet for those who do (or seem to) have a strong connection to it – modern Bedouin – this connection can be a symbolically and politically significant resource. The exercise of shaykhly leadership, reputation-building and mediation, not to mention in some cases accumulation, may have often been crucial to forming and maintaining '*ashā'ir*', and indeed for giving significance to the concept of Badu. But more recently, to varying degrees, the idea of the representative patron and his technique of interpersonal sovereignty has flown into a wider socio-political field. Meanwhile the significance of being Badu and therefore 'of' certain powerful named entities coming out of the once-ungoverned steppe lands, with a reputation for fierce autonomy, cultural distinctiveness and the potential to resist, while built on representative patrons and shaykhly power, now exists independently of it, as a far wider claim to solidarity. My interlocutors indicated this through their social media curation, through the music and cultural references they favoured, and through their willingness to answer what they saw as slights and collective insults through collective action, thus linking their honour to a wider name. These two dimensions of the tribal in contemporary Jordan remain precariously linked; the power of the representative patron resting implicitly upon the collective force they might be able to call upon through their claims of representation.

However, significant changes in the use of tribal idioms are increasingly evident, rendering this link increasingly tenuous, and it is possible to imagine a future when representative sovereignty and broad categorical claims of name/space exist largely independently. As Hughes (2019:5) argues, it has become possible for the first time to talk about 'tribes without shaykhs' in the current Jordanian political environment of 'tribal voting' and tribal Facebook pages, used to mobilise young, often unemployed Bedouin men for the answering of insults and the furthering of collective honour. The tribal idiom can be deployed with greater speed and over greater distances than ever before through social media, in the process circumventing its former gatekeepers; old,

genealogically-senior men from certain lineages with a reputation for leadership, arbitration and knowledge of traditional dispute resolution (of the sort considered in Chapter 2), allowing new potential gatekeepers to emerge to take their place. As such, the history I describe, one that I argue has been defined by fields of representative sovereignty on the part of shaykhs and men of influence, is one that is changing rapidly into something else (as, arguably, it always has been).

Indeed, I have suggested in Chapter 6 that protests and the types of broad solidarity they embody often turn against the politics of representation, and the older male ‘relatives’ who enact it. On both sides of the representative ‘bargain’ (although, as we have seen, it may not have looked much like a bargain from below), mutual obligations are called into question as some, especially younger and precarious individuals, see little benefit nor a guaranteed path to social reproduction through deference to older kin and beyond to wider genealogical authority, as argued in Chapter 5. Meanwhile, the shaykhs and great lineages of notables exist ever more independently of those they once claimed to represent, and are increasingly unwilling and unable to acknowledge their obligations to their non-elite rural clients. The current unsettling crises in Jordan around land and housing, economic reform, migration, identity and the role of Islam² seem to be reproducing both tribes and something akin to shaykhs, but crucially the link between them is becoming less clear. The royal house may have once turned to large-scale categories of name/space and the language of blood, genealogy and relatedness to legitimise its power, but these forms are also being repurposed to protest against it.

I have sought, through an exploration of experiences of youth, uncertainty, protest and everyday politics in and around Madaba and its Bedouin villages, to make this process of continuity/change ethnographically visible, bringing particularity to political trends, looking at how, when and why my interlocutors reckoned their social world through categories of tribe, in this moment (one among many) of historical flux. I have considered imagined futures (both anticipated and feared), as well as images of the good, especially as they relate to protest and social change. This has involved a double focus, on both continuity and change, considering how each reproduces elements of the other; the contemporary reproduction and historically contingent and emergent nature of

² A promising direction for further research might be the efforts by various political Islamists to capitalise on the bored and precarious waiting youths of the Bedouin areas, who have shown themselves receptive to grand political schemes and protest, but who often associate political Islam, both Salafism and the IAF/Brotherhood, with urban West-Bankers (Wiktorowicz 2001).

this ethnographic setting, but also the ‘scandalous continuity’ (as Shryock (2019a) following Dresch (1992) puts it) of some of its elements. Thus, even in these unsettling times, form may outlast events and ‘events’, like land settlement and protests, may perhaps outlast form. The temporality implied here is not one of linear, discrete epochs; it is not best conceived of via a series of responses to changes, whether dialectic or through Foucauldian before and after genealogies. Rather it implies the quality that specific moments in time, history and human memory have to be overlapping and interpenetrating, endlessly dialogical and circulatory.

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